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HINDUISM TODAY

Affirming Sanatana Dharma and Recording the Modern History of a Billion-Strong Global Religion in Renaissance



Rajasthan's Holy Cow Festival



ARUN MISHRA



NIRAJ THAKKER

COVER: A young child in Rajasthan pets a Desi calf during the nine-day Gounavaratri festival at Pathmeda Goshala, sanctuary for 125,000 cows; (above) Musicians perform on traditional instruments at the Balinese Kuningan Festival in Germany.

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Following in Her Footsteps

Every 12 years thousands of devotees undertake one of India's most dangerous pilgrimages as they accompany the Goddess Nanda Devi 173 miles into the Himalayas. Beginning in Nanda Devi's home village of Nauti, they are led by an auspicious four-horned ram to the sacred Homkund lake, where She will meet Her beloved, Lord Siva. Page 58...

Pilgrims trek along narrow cliffs as they slowly ascend to the yatra's heights of nearly 17,000 feet. In the crowd of orange umbrellas is a bejewelled palanquin, carrying the golden Goddess.

GLOBAL DHARMA

ITALY

Celebrating Diwali

ITALY'S 156,000 HINDUS FESTIVELY celebrated Diwali last October, in a country that officially recognized the Hindu religion and its festivals only two years prior. From the many small towns in the Alps to the foggy valleys of the Padan Plain and the warm shores of Sicily, the whole "boot" shone with colorful, glittering lights for this glorious night.

In a unifying glow, Italy's Diwali was celebrated with pujas, vigils and cultural initiatives attended by Indians, local Italians, Mauritians, Sri Lankans and Bangladeshis. In the Hindu communities of Reggio Emilia, Vicenza, Mantova, Brescia and Parma—to mention just a few—the celebrations lasted all through the night, with devotees kept

awake by prayers and traditional chants. In Catania, Sicily, the city government granted the Hindu community the use of a 1,000-seat amphitheater for the celebration.

On October 23, for the first time ever in Rome, a Hindu conference was held at the hall of the Santa Maria in Aquiro, part of the Institute of the Italian Parliament, testifying to the improved spirit of dialogue between Hindus and other Italian institutions. Speeches delivered by Italian politicians indicated a spirit of true pluralism and openness towards Hindu culture and tradition. The



Festival of lights: Monastics and other Hindus from around Italy gather at Gitananda Ashram to celebrate Diwali

event's host, Senator Manconi, emphasized that this was truly a historic event. Senator Malan agreed during his heartfelt speech. Of the Hindu religion, he warmly stated: "This hall is

full of ancient marble remnants from the past, but I had never imagined that something more ancient and lasting than these stones laid down by the Roman Empire would ever enter it"

BOOK REVIEW

Himalayas: Through the Lens

COVERING ANCIENT HIMALAYAN architecture, recent projects in restoration and new innovations in building and crafts, the book *Himalayan Style* demonstrates through vivid photography the tremendous vitality, range and potential of

Himalayan forms and designs. Containing a treasury of images by photographer Thomas Kelly and complete with eloquent prose written by Claire Burkert, the book engages readers familiar with Himalayan culture and those new to it alike.

Himalayan Style begins with a focus on the many historic structures in Bhutan, India, Nepal and Tibet that have been renovated and often adapted for new purposes. It shows how the region's style is expressive of spiritual belief, from the distinctive shapes of stupas, to offerings of flowers and tikka powder. A section titled "Traditional Living in the Himalayas" presents homes and furnishings exhibiting a variety of construction methods, materials and decorative detail. Another section highlights contemporary lodges for travelers to the region.

The book closes with a vibrant section celebrating the creative ways of living and working in



Style: (left) A Shiva Lingam at Pashupathinath, Nepal's most revered Hindu temple; (above) A woman collects water in the Tusha Hiti, an exquisite oval step-well in the courtyard of Sundari Chowk. Seventy-two finely crafted stone carvings line the step-well.

the Kathmandu Valley, where designers and craftsmen work together, creating innovative homes and crafts utilizing local materials and techniques.

Throughout, Thomas Kelly presents readers with his personal collection of stunning images, ranging in focus from

the small detail of a Tibetan tea table to a vast mountain landscape dotted with stupas. *Himalayan Style* offers a fresh look at the man-made beauty in the Himalayas and deepens our understanding and appreciation of this overwhelmingly beautiful region.

INDIA

Preventative Medicine

IN EARLY NOVEMBER OF 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's new Ministry of AYUSH and appointed to its head Shripad Yesso Naik. The new ministry is charged with encouraging growth of India's rich therapeutic traditions across the nation. *Ayush* means life or lifespan; and AYUSH is an acronym for the traditional life-enhancing therapies to be promoted: ayurveda, yoga and naturopathy, unani, siddha and homeopathy.

This appointment was made in keeping with the Indian government's recent focus on health care. Under India's upcoming universal health plan, the government intends to offer guaranteed benefits to all of India's 1.25 billion people. The program

will cost an estimated \$26 billion over the next four years.

Addressing the 32nd annual convention of the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin held in San Antonio, Texas, Mr. Modi explained, "It is my firm belief that our focus needs to go beyond health insurance. The way ahead lies in health assurance. We need to focus on preventive health care, where public participation has a major role to play." This idea of preventive care is what the new ministry is all about, as it promotes India's ancient traditions, which make for a strong, effective and comparatively inexpensive



Blending cultures: Mr. Naik greets the media as he arrives to take office at the Ministry of AYUSH in New Delhi in November 11, 2014

means of improving the health of the nation.

In discussing the system of yoga, Mr. Naik told Reuters: "This is our system, and it has not

received enough prominence. We will take it to the masses." To fuel its work, the new ministry has been allocated US\$174 million for the 2014-15 financial year.

UNITED KINGDOM

Hindus Educating Police

A NEW POLICE TRAINING VIDEO was recently published by the National Council of Hindu Temples in the United Kingdom (NCHT). It features NCHT general secretary Satish K. Sharma offering important information to police officers about Hindu customs, practices and beliefs. He states in the video, "The

Hindu way of life is a way of living according to an understanding which has been refined and tested and gathered over at least 5,000 years." A similar video created by the Chicago, Illinois, police department states, "Even a basic knowledge of a person's customs and culture enables police officers to conduct their

duties in a more efficient and respectful manner." The NCHT video is available at: bit.ly/nchttraining

.....
Needed knowledge: Mr. Sharma gives a useful summary of Hindu culture, customs and beliefs in his 15-minute video



SWITZERLAND

The Swiss Honor Their Cows

IN LATE SEPTEMBER TOWNS throughout Switzerland observed Alpabfahrt, an annual festival celebrating the journey made by Alpine region cows as they leave their summer homes in their high mountain pastures and travel to the lowlands for their winter stay on farms. Alpine cows number some 380,000 in Switzerland, 500,000 in Austria and 50,000 in Germany.

Following their massive migration from the mountains, the cows, elaborately decorated, take part in parades which also

feature local dance and music, including alp-horn players and yodelers. Local merchants and farmers set up stands displaying local goods for sale, such as alpine cheeses, honey, breads, jams and a variety of traditional cow bells. The rural farmers are proud of this celebratory tradition and of their cows—especially those that produce the most milk. These bountiful bovines are given the largest bells and most colorful decorations for the event.



Bells and flowers: Over 200 cows, beautifully adorned, parade down main street in the village of Schüpfheim, Switzerland



Where we belong: Rawail Singh, one of the leaders of Kabul's Sikh community, helps his wife with cooking for Diwali

AFGHANISTAN

Facing Discrimination

ACCORDING TO A JANUARY 2015 article by *The Wall Street Journal*, many Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan are feeling compelled to leave their homeland due to increasing discrimination from the country's religious majorities. Rawail Singh, a leader of Kabul's Sikh community explained: "If the country's new government doesn't pay attention to this issue, then one day there will be no Sikhs or Hindus left here." Residents surmise that the population is down to about 7,000

from roughly 200,000 Sikh and Hindu residents before 1992.

One main issue Sikhs and Hindus face is opposition to the custom of burning their dead. Many Afghans see the practice as anti-Islamic and have tried to stop it, shouting insults or throwing stones at funeral processions. Also, Hindu and Sikh children are being bullied in schools. Despite these and other challenges, Mr. Singh says he is proud of being Afghan. "I love Afghanistan. It's my country. This is where we belong."

INDIA

Congresswoman Visits India

ON HER FIRST VISIT TO INDIA, US Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard met with Dada J.P. Vaswani in Pune on December 25, 2014. While there she attended a kirtan session at the Sadhu Vaswani Mission's Spiritual Camp in the area. Upon arrival she addressed those present, "I am coming to you today all the way from Hawaii in the spirit of aloha: deep respect and open heart." She led

the session in praise of Krishna, stating that Krishna's teachings truly have the power to solve the world's problems.

Vaswani praised the congresswoman, saying: "A new civilization is to be born, and of this new civilization, the woman's soul will be the builder, and Tulsi Gabbard is one such woman soul. She is one of the great builders for whom the world is waiting."



In the spirit: Tulsi Gabbard singing and playing a guitar with the Sadhu Vaswani Mission's Spiritual Camp kirtan group

BRIEFLY...

FROM DECEMBER 29TH, 2014, TO New Years Day, devotees of the Narasingua Peroumal temple of Saint-Pierre, Reunion, enthusiastically celebrated Vaikuntha Ekadasi, one of the biggest festivals for Lord Vishnu, with pujas conducted by five priests brought in from India. This year the high point of this four-day event occurred on the night of December 31, New Year's Eve.

RESEARCHERS FROM THE

University of Vienna, Austria, have discovered something unexpected about the Bladderwort plant, or *Utricularia*, a normally carnivorous plant that commonly resides in fresh, still-water ponds and

swamps. By means of advanced bladder-like traps, this genus of plant captures and dissolves small insects for nutrients. The December 2014 study showed that when the plants grow in areas with fewer insects, they resort to trapping pollen and algae for food. Plants on this more vegetarian diet proved healthier than their purely carnivorous counterparts, showing increased weight and length.

ON JANUARY 6, JAGADGURU SRI Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji of the Sri Sharada Peetham, Sringeri, Karnataka, announced his successor. On January 23, 2015, Sri Kuppa Venkateshwara Prasada Sharma was initiated

into sannyas and officially recognized as Mahaswamiji's designated successor in this unbroken lineage which extends back to Shri Adi Shankaracharya.

OUR CONGRATULATIONS TO THE Ramakrishna Order for having produced over a century's worth of their monthly 40-page publication, *The Vedanta Kesari*. Since its inception in 1895 the religious monthly, which emphasizes Vedantic teachings, has featured articles in English and other languages pertaining to the philosophy of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

AFTER NEARLY 15 YEARS IN GES- tation, the House of Religions opened in Bern, Switzerland, last December. This multi-religious place of worship houses sections for five major religions: Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Bud-

dhists and a syncretic form of Islam popular in Turkey called Alevisim. Brigitta Rotach, the project's cultural director, expressed the theme of the House of Religions: "When someone is afraid of another religion, it can be enough for the person to meet people of that religion to wipe away the prejudice."

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and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



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IN MY OPINION

The Earth Is Our Temple

How Mother Bhumi saved my life and taught me many of our religion's deep and natural lessons

BY NILA BALA

WHEN I WAS IN HIGH school, I tried to discover God and ethics through science—looking into physics, biochemistry and neurology. Where could our moral center be found? But then I fell off a cliff, and I stopped wondering so much.

This happened at an overlook in Peru. My friend shouted, "Get up, there's ants all over the bench." I stepped backwards. And then there was no more stepping. My right foot felt nothingness and I fell backwards down the cliff. It felt like those perfectly calm moments before sleep; I had no sense of falling. About ten feet down, a cradle of trees caught me. Mother Bhumi caught me. If I had fallen a few feet to the left or right, I would be dead. The words of Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* echoed in me: "There is a banyan tree which has its roots upward and its branches down, and the Vedic hymns are its leaves. One who knows this tree is the knower of the *Vedas*." I had been given the gift of a second chance—a chance to better know my religion and the *Vedas*. That moment provided me comfort and brought me closer to my Hindu faith.

I have always loved nature—I spent my childhood hiking and going to the beach. But not until I was nineteen, spending a summer in the rainforest, did I truly experience the natural world and thus begin to understand the heart of Hinduism. My japa became my early morning walks. The quiet—interrupted only by the cries of birds and monkeys—calmed my soul. As a result, I absorbed a deeper understanding of both *ahimsa* and *karma*. Before living in the rainforest, I equated *ahimsa*—nonviolence—with being a vegetarian and opposing warfare of any kind. However, this view was too simplistic. So many of our daily actions—using electricity, nonrenewable goods, and so forth—are hurting the Earth at a disturbing rate. For that brief summer in the rainforest, living without any of these conveniences, I



realized how simple life could be. I began to coexist with creatures that many find repulsive—snakes, spiders, mosquitos and ticks. They became a daily part of life in our open forest hut. We once found a possum in our shower, and it was obvious that he wanted to be in the shower no more than we wanted him

there. We released him back into the wild. On another occasion I found a tick, and upon releasing it, a tourist questioned me as to why I didn't kill it. I explained the concept of *ahimsa*—that the tick was only behaving according to its nature, and that I could respond with compassion or with cruelty.

Although I now live with modern conveniences, I have not forgotten the deep and beautiful lessons of the forest, especially that of nonviolence. I was also taught the lessons of karma: that there is a natural balance to all things, and that in order to preserve it, we should take only what we need. Many people see themselves as separate from the Earth, but Hinduism rightfully points out that we are one with our planet. I've also learned that it is so easy to want more and more, but the reality is that only *moksha* can fill that void of desire. Lord Krishna advises us not to grow attached to things that will ultimately never satisfy us.

The Earth saved me eight years ago, and since that day She has saved me again and again. The bedrock of my Hindu faith lies in understanding the immense capacity the Earth has to give to us, and our responsibility to give back. This is why my mandir is not only where Lord Krishna's murti is, but it is also the groves of redwood trees, the sand dunes and the surf. The Earth is our home and the heart of our Hindu faith.

NILA BALA, 27, is an assistant public defender in Baltimore. She attended college at Stanford University, taught as a preschool teacher and attended law school at Yale University.

How We Describe Our Deities

Hindu views of God can seem complex and confounding on first encounter. Here we explore the most important and popular.

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI

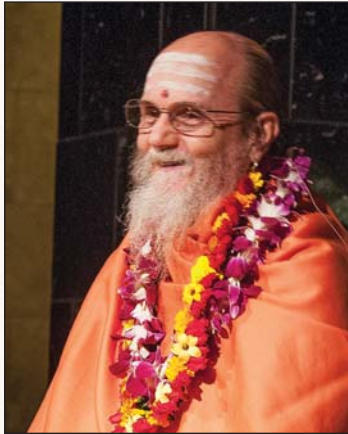
HINDU TEMPLES TYPICALLY OFFER DESCRIPTIONS of their enshrined Deities, known as *murtis*, on their websites or in publications as an educative aid. Studying these descriptions, I found a variety of approaches conveying distinctly different perspectives on the Hindu understanding of God. These differing views can be perplexing to Hindus and non-Hindus alike, especially when a temple, ashram or swami speaks of one of the views as though it were the official, or singular, Hindu understanding. To give clarity, we explore here four distinct ways of describing God and His/Her representations, or murtis. The intent is not to suggest that all Hindus adopt the same interpretation, rather it is to look at the most common presentations, reflect on the traditions they may represent and place them in a larger context.

God as a Divine Trinity

The first type of presentation is based on the popular idea, thought to originate in the *Puranas*, that a trinity of separate Gods—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—perform the basic functions of creation, preservation and destruction, respectively. The *Puranas* are Hindu folk narratives containing ethical and cosmological teachings about God, Gods, mankind and the world. A multiplicity of Gods and Goddesses are described and their exploits told in symbolically rich stories. The 18 major *Puranas* are classified as secondary scripture, known as *smriti*.

Temples that have prominent shrines to both Siva and Vishnu often adopt the trinity perspective to explain what otherwise might appear to be two supreme Gods under one roof. This view asserts that God Siva, represented by the Sivalingam, is the Lord of Destruction. Sri Vishnu, represented by the Venkateshwara murti, is the Lord of Preservation. This is presented, for example, on the website of the Shiva-Vishnu Temple of Livermore, California.

A serious problem arises from this description, for it wrongly depicts Hinduism as polytheistic—believing in multiple Gods without any of them being supreme. In reality, the temple's Saivites look to Siva as supreme, while the Vaishnavites regard Vishnu as ultimate. It also generates more questions than answers. Why is Lord Brahma, the third part of this trinity, so rarely enshrined? Why do we find Shakti as the main Deity in so many temples, when She is not part of the trinity? There are other ways to interpret the trinity. In Bali, while temples are built separately for Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, the belief is that this three-fold Divinity is a one Divine Being called Sanghyang Widhi.



Viewing All Deities as the One Absolute Reality

Now to a second type of presentation, which arises from the Smarta tradition, one of Hinduism's four primary denominations (along with Saivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism). Generally, Smartas do not regard the Deities as real, conscious spiritual beings, but as symbols of a one spiritual reality. Consider the teachings of Swami Tejomayananda, head of Chinmaya Mission: "The Truth pointed out in all the *Puranas* is that there is only one Absolute Reality, Brahman, from which everything has emerged. In the *Ganesha Purana*, that Reality will be indicated by the word *Ganesha* while in the *Siva Purana* the name *Siva* will be used to refer to that Reality. Although all Deities have a second 'identity,' in charge of particular cosmic functions, and are also known in their various incarnations on Earth (that is Vishnu as Rama and Krishna), their absolute identity is the same. As it is said, 'Truth is One, sages call it by many names.' When we realize this, we will not become confused."

This perspective emphasizes the belief of the Advaita Vedanta philosophy of the Smarta denomination that the One Reality, Paramatma, manifests through the various Deities; when we worship any of the murtis—Siva, Vishnu, etc.—it is actually Paramatma that we are worshipping.

Temples that have a wide array of Deities may tend to be inclusive by emphasizing Hinduism's diversity in descriptions of their temple murtis. Some may cite the same Vedic verse that Swami Tejomayananda refers to: "Ekam Sat Vipra Bahuda Vadanti," often translated as "Truth is one, sages express it variously." In other words, Hindus all believe in a Supreme Being, but unlike in other religions, they do not have a single concept regarding the name and nature of the Supreme Being. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan affirms this perspective in his book *The Hindu View of Life*: "The Hindu recognizes one Supreme Spirit, though different names are given to it."

The above Smarta view is behind many and varied presentations. An important counter-perspective declares that God, the Supreme Being, and the Gods (His/Her helpers) are real and conscious beings, not symbols of cosmic powers, not human constructs. The murti is the earthly representative of a real Divinity in the highest plane of reality, serving as a channel for His/Her blessings. When worshiped by a qualified priest in a properly consecrated



temple, the murti becomes the very body of God on the physical plane. This perspective is represented in the next three descriptions.

The Agamic Perspective

Another interpretation emphasizes the theological perceptions appearing in a body of Hindu scripture called the *Agamas*. The *Agamas* are revelations on sacred living, worship, yoga and philosophy. Saivas, Shaktas and Vaishnavas regard these sacred texts as divinely revealed, *shruti*—on par with the *Vedas*—and each denomination has its distinct collection. In the *Vaishnava Agamas*, Narayana (Vishnu) is the Supreme Being. Siva is extolled in the *Saiva Agamas* as the Supreme Being. All the *Agamas* look at creation, preservation and destruction as three powers wielded by the one Supreme Being and not by a trinity of separate Gods. Most priests serving in North American temples have been trained in either the *Vaishnava* or *Saiva Agamas*, and some in both.

In 2014 I attended a grand consecration of the Hindu Temple of

Murti as Mystic Body of the Divine: A Saivite priest sits before the Sivalingam. His purifications and puja have drawn God Siva in His body of light, to bless the world. For some, the murti is a symbol, for others it is a channel for God's grace.

Greater Fort Worth in Texas. One of the priests explained that the Sivalingam murti was being installed according to the traditions of the *Saiva Agamas*, and the murti of Venkateshwara (Vishnu) was being installed according to the traditions of the *Vaishnava Agamas*. For the benefit of visitors, when a temple's murti is described according to the Agamic perspective, it is helpful to identify the denomination.

For example, to Vaishnava Hindus, the image of Sri Venkateshwara is considered the Supreme Being, God Vishnu. The temple priests are performing worship of Him according to the texts of the *Pancharatra Agama*. Likewise, to Hindus of the Saivite denomination, the murti of the Sri Sivalingam represents the Supreme Being God Siva. His worship is conducted according to the traditions found in the *Saiva Agamas*. The website of the S.V. Temple at Pittsburgh offers: "Hindu devotees believe that divine power has manifested itself in the murti (icon/idol). Major religious events like *kumbhabhishekam* are performed to re-energize the murti with divine power, which can either be diluted or lost due to transgressions committed unknowingly by the priests or the worshipers."

Introducing the Gods as Divine Helpers

A fifth style of presentation, from our Kadavul Hindu Temple website, depicts a Supreme God and other Gods (Mahadevas or Divinities) who are subordinate to the Deity. "Kadavul Hindu Temple follows the Saivite tradition, the oldest of the four main denominations of Hinduism. In the Tamil language of South India, our religion is known as Saiva Samayam, or simply Saivam. We worship the one Supreme Being as God Siva, and Lords Ganesha and Murugan, whom God Siva created to assist Him in the care of His great creation. In Saivism, Shakti is God Siva's manifest power and is not separate from Him. This is depicted most clearly in the image of God Siva as Ardhanarishvara, whose left side is female and right side is male. In Kadavul there is no separate Deity representing Shakti, for in our tradition the Supreme Being is neither male nor female, but encompasses both."

A Shakta Presentation

At the Sri Kailash Ashrama in Bengaluru, the Ultimate Divine is worshiped as the Goddess: "In Srividya tradition She is known as Rajarajeshwari (Lalita or Tripura Sundari). She is visualized as an exceedingly charming lady, three-eyed and four-armed....In this form She symbolizes the Supreme Reality (para-tattva), known in Vedanta as Brahman, and in Tantra as transcendental consciousness (para-samvit). She presides over Sri Chakra, the mystical diagram, either linear (rekha) or iconic (meru), bestowing liberating insight into the nature of the world and into the nature of reality."

Our informal study certainly reveals the rich variety of Hindu perspectives on the Divine. This article is not suggesting that all temples adopt the same view of God and the murtis. Rather, it is meant as a catalyst for temple administrators to give full attention to how they describe the Deities, to clearly and deliberately reflect, especially for visitors, the temple's tradition and philosophy.



Hinduism and Science

I commend you for publishing Dr. Alok Kumar's article, "Sciences of the Ancient Hindus" in the January 2015 issue. This well written article provides a great deal of useful information. I also liked your coverage of Hindu and Buddhist temples in Java. Keep up the good work. Yours is the best Hindu magazine.

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Thank you HINDUISM TODAY for the excellent article "Sciences of the Ancient Hindus" by Prof. Alok Kumar, who has fulfilled the need for a book on the pioneer work of ancient Hindus in all the branches of science. It makes me proud to be a Hindu. I will ask my children, grandchildren and all others to read it and discuss the contents in groups to spread the truth and remove the cloud of doubt in educated and illiterates all over the world.

DR. SHRIHARSHA SHARMA
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I read the article "Sciences of the Ancient Hindus," and I happen to be reading his book, but I didn't know about his reasons for self-publishing it. My congratulations to him for sticking to his convictions. Instead of being ashamed of their heritage, Hindus, especially scholars, must defend their valuable culture. Due to the efforts and courage of many Hindus, myself and others have come to know this rich history of ancient India. I truly think that some day the West will honor and recognize India as the cradle of civilization.

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During the holiday season I read HINDUISM TODAY's book review "Sciences of the Ancient Hindus" (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2015) by Prof. Alok Kumar. Having read the book entirely, I would recommend it to any Hindu. Not only is it written by a trained scientist, but it has precise references from Hindu scriptures, Hindu and non-Hindu scientists and scholars; and it has an extensive bibliography. The book is organized by subject: mathematics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, yoga, medicine, etc.

I got the book because of my interests in the sciences, and because of the conviction Prof. Kumar has shown by not changing *Hindus to Indians* in the title and throughout the book, in spite of publisher after publisher demanding him to make the change. Professor Kumar's book makes for an easily

accessible reference for Hindus to speak with confidence and with verifiable facts; making it easier for people to talk about the contribution of Hinduism to science.

I will be giving the book to my two children on their birthdays and I suggest readers secure a copy for their personal libraries. Request your local library to get at least one copy, and request your local universities and colleges to keep at least two copies. Consider giving this book as a gift to your children, grandchildren, and graduating high school or college students, family members and friends.

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For Teachers and Parents

I found your magazine in graduate school while in Wisconsin many years ago, while also reading many different magazines from other organizations. What is unique about HINDUISM TODAY is that—while having its own sampradaya's outlook—it is a universally Hindu magazine. It caters to Hinduism in a way that allows any Hindu to identify with the issues. Why? Because you see yourself represented in this magazine at different levels, whatever organization you come from.

I've discovered in these pages some of the most remote, unknown kinds of things. For example, the Hindus of Java. Not many Hindus would know about them. Here I read about Hinduism in Mauritius, Trinidad and on occasion see a feature about East Africa, South Africa and my own country of Guyana. HINDUISM TODAY is truly something that has been needed in the Hindu world for a long time. As a teacher of teachers, I also regard it as an important resource in acquiring authentic Hindu knowledge. In preparing our students in Guyana for the important Caribbean Examinations Council Exam in London, we have found HINDUISM TODAY and the books *The History of Hindu India* and *What Is Hinduism?* an enormous help.

SWAMI AKSHARANANDA
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Living an Ahimsa Lifestyle

I thoroughly enjoyed reading your article, "Religious Comparisons" (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2015). However, on page 43 it states: "God is pure love and consciousness but may be terrifying as well." This may fit the description of a "Personal God" (*Saguna Brahman*), but not of the Ultimate Truth, *Nirguna Brahman*, or "Impersonal God," that transcends as well as emanates the universe. For Brahman is infinite (*Ananta*) and of the nature of *Satchitananda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss), and

where there is Infinite Bliss, there can be no fear or terror; there is nothing but pure love.

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Temple Visions

I liked reading "Bringing Gods to Earth Through Stone" (Jan/Feb/Mar, 2015). When I saw the picture of the 18-foot Ananta Padmanabha (sleeping Vishnu), I remembered having seen this statue at the workshop of Perumal Sthapati in Mamallapuram.

It was in 2006 that I visited Mamallapuram with my husband, but the image of Ananta Padmanabha is still vivid in my memory. I recall Perumal Sthapati as one of the most gifted and devout stone carvers we have in India. His sincerity towards his craft comes forth in the article when he is quoted saying, "When I am asked to carve a Ganesha murti, I get totally merged into the carving and become Ganesha himself." His devotion to his guru is evident when he states that he feels his guru is still standing beside him and guiding him in his work every day—even after his guru had passed away.

Journalist R. Kesav Mallia has done justice to Perumal by incorporating his achievements in a lucid and earthy article. Last but not the least, I was inspired to learn about Kauai's Iraivan Temple—the only hand-made granite temple built in the US. What's deeply motivating is Gurudeva's (Sivaya Subramuniyaswami) vision of the temple and his willingness to wait patiently for over 25 years for that vision to come to fruition. We need such examples to build a better world for the next generation.

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I was delighted to read your article in the January 2015 issue about Perumal Sthapati. Superbly written, it is an excellent tribute to a remarkable man and his phenomenal artistry. Thank you for doing this work. My work with Indian artisans throughout the subcontinent has been extensive for these past 43 years, and it is always a joy to reconnect with artists of Perumalji's stature. It feels good to see such a positive affirmation about how his work shines above others.

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Change Of Faith

I found the article by Dr. J. J. Gordon, "How Ganesha Became Our Life's Pilot" very inter-

esting and inspiring. On seeing the Ganesha murti, he—a militant atheist, British citizen, and highly educated person—suddenly changed to become a Hindu. That establishes two things: One, that the Swayambu Ganesha has some potent, tremendous power; and two, that Dr. Gordon already had some unknown potential to accept the great challenge of that sudden and enormous change in his faith.

In a similar example, a bright youth named Narendra was already ripe for a change when he approached Sri Ramakrishna. He would later become a swami known as Vivekananda. Hundreds of others who saw Ramakrishna did not become world-known swamis, only Narendra became such, upon his initiation. He was loaded with positive karma from previous lives; it just needed a spark.

HINDUISM TODAY is doing an excellent service to the world by re-publishing Dr. Gordon's story.

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Understanding Hinduism

I have enjoyed reading HINDUISM TODAY since its beginnings in San Francisco a few decades ago. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami had a vision of promoting ancient Hindu wisdom and inspiring a Hindu renaissance.

Young Hindus today observe rituals being performed at home and in temples, but are

not informed about the significance or meaning behind them. Very few understand that Hinduism is much more than external ceremony. It's unfortunate that youth often read biased and distorted views about Hinduism in their school textbooks and get turned away from their religion.

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Vikram Samwat

I want to wish a happy, healthy, wealthy and prosperous Vikram Samwat to the valuable readers of HINDUISM TODAY. The year 2072 of the Vikram Samwat [one of India's main lunar calendar systems], will start on Chaitra Shukla Pratipada, corresponding to March 21, 2015 and ending on April 7, 2016. The Christian New Year starts and ends on the same calendar day each year without adjusting to the slight, yearly astrological shifts. You can get the current Vikram Samwat by adding 57 to the Christian year.

In the US, the Chinese and Mexican New Year's days are celebrated with great enthusiasm, and both holidays are officially observed in public schools. Unfortunately, Indian teachers and students are uneducated when asked about the Indian New Year. Even most Indians abroad do not know that we have a new year other than the Gregorian New Year. The new Samwat is celebrated in India

as an auspicious day on which people clean their houses and don new clothes. Puja, bhandara, arati and havanas are performed at temples and in homes. Donations and alms are given to the poor. On the auspicious occasion of Samwat Day, the holy cities of Haridwar, Mathura, Prayag, Kashi and others are crowded with devotees who travel from near and far to take a holy dip in the rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Brahma Sarovar of Kurukshetra. Those who cannot travel take a bath at a local river, canal, pond or spring. Vikram Samwat has been observed in many parts of India for many years. Before the performance of a samskara or puja, the Samwat is used for astrological calculations by priests.

It is believed that the cosmos was created on this day; hence this being the first day of the year and also the beginning of the Shrishti Samwat—or "world calendar" according to the *Vedas*.

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or visit: www.hinduismtoday.com/letters

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.

Science and Religion Agree: Giving Is Good for You

How generous souls bless the world and themselves at the same time

THE WISE ONES KNEW IT ALL ALONG, BUT now scientists have proved it to be true—giving is good for you.

"Giving affects our brain chemistry," reports Arthur Brooks in *The New York Sun*. "It induces endorphins that produce very mild euphoric sensations... Charity also lowers the stress hormones that cause unhappiness.

"Generous people were found to have dramatically lower levels of the stress hormones cortisol, epinephrine and norepinephrine in their brains. The bottom line is that giving is not just good for your favorite cause; it's good for you, too. For relief from stress and depression, it's probably more cost-effective than whatever your doctor might prescribe. And it's not illegal or fattening..."

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, HINDUISM TODAY's founder, taught that "You can't give anything away but that it comes back to you, in one form or another, tenfold. That is the law." He explained that the door that opens within you when you give is the



Creating a will and keeping it updated is the way to craft your life's mission statement and uplift whatever you deem most worthy

same door that lets abundance in. When you have cracked open that one door, it is cracked open. When you leave it open wide, it is open wide. The guru was giving us a great gift with

those words.

He established the HINDUISM TODAY Production Fund as a channel for those who would share the magazine's vision, and want to keep it alive and thriving. We invite you to join those noble ones and keep that door to good fortune flung wide open by giving generously to the Production Fund.

If you have given before, please give again.

An especially potent way to give is to include the Fund in your estate plan. Estate planning offers many varied ways of giving, some of which you will find to be just right for you, even beneficial. They can lead to substantial tax savings, for example. See our website www.hheonline.org and click on "ways to give" for a clear and simple overview of planned giving's many opportunities.

Contact us anytime at hhe@hindu.org or 1-808-634-5407. You can also ask for our informative Hindu Heritage Endowment and Production Fund newsletters at gurudeva.org/email-news.

QUOTES & QUIPS

Cow protection, to me, is one of the most wonderful phenomena of human evolution.

Mahatma Gandhi

The knowing Self is not born; It does not die. It has not sprung from anything; nothing has sprung from It. Birthless, eternal, everlasting and ancient, It is not killed when the body is killed. *Yajur Veda, Katha Upanishad, 1.2.18*

It is the duty of parents to safeguard the spiritual interests of their child. As the parents have to feed a child which cannot feed itself, so have they to look after its spiritual interests also till it is able to take care of them. **Chandrashekara Bharathi Mahaswami** (1892–1954), 34th Jagadguru of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham

I realized it's OK to be proud of who you are. **Neha Dhawan** of New York, on the effect of participating in a Hindu Heritage Summer Camp for the previous ten years

Be pure and simple, and love all, because all are one. Live a sincere life; be natural, and be honest with yourself. **Meher Baba** (1894–1969), *Indian spiritual guru*

Yoga should not be just an exercise, but a means to connect with the world and with nature. It should bring a change in our lifestyle and create awareness within us. **Narendra Modi**, *India's Prime Minister*

Hinduism is wholly free from the strange obsession of some faiths that the acceptance of a particular religious metaphysics is necessary for salvation, and non-acceptance thereof is a heinous sin meriting eternal punishment in hell. **Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan** (1888–1975), *Philosopher, statesmen and second president of India*

The greater danger for most of us lies not

in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark. **Michelangelo** (1475–1564), *Italian sculptor, painter and architect*

Forget the past. The vanished lives of all men are dark with many shames. Human conduct is ever unreliable until man is anchored in the Divine. Everything in the future will improve if you are making a spiritual effort now. **Sri Yukteswar Giri** (1855–1936), *guru of Paramahansa Yogananda*

When you obey laws of health, your body is your friend. When you love God, nature is your friend. When you love man, God is your friend. When you love hard work, success is your friend. When you possess an understanding heart, peace and harmony are your friends. Everywhere you have a

friend. In all things there is a friend for you. **Swami Omkarananda Saraswati** (1930–2000), *guru and founder Omkarananda Ashram Himalayas*

God is a circle whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere. **Voltaire** (1694–1778), *French writer and philosopher*

Access to the *Vedas* is the greatest privilege this century may claim over all previous centuries. **J. Robert Oppenheimer** (1904–1967), *theoretical physicist*

When you know who you are; when your mission is clear and you burn with the inner fire of unbreakable will; no cold can touch your heart; no deluge can dampen your purpose. You know that you are alive. **Chief Seattle** (1780–1866), *Native American chieftain*

A spiritually illumined soul lives in the world, yet is never contaminated by it. **Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati** (1833–1899), *19th-century sannyasin*

People who think they know everything are a great annoyance to those of us who do. **Isaac Asimov** (1920–1992), *author and professor of biochemistry*

Birth is not a beginning; death is not an end. There is existence without limitation; there is continuity without a starting point. **Chuang Tzu** (369–286), *Chinese philosopher*

Man needs a guru. But a man must have faith in the guru's words. He succeeds in spiritual life by looking on his guru as God Himself. **Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa** (1836–1886)

Becoming upset is a temporary suspension of our higher faculties. **Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami**, *publisher of HINDUISM TODAY*

Listen for silence in noisy places; feel at peace in the midst of disturbance; awaken joy when there is no reason. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927–2001), *founder of HINDUISM TODAY*



"To laugh is human. To moo is bovine."

DID YOU KNOW?

Mother of All Cows

EVERY CULTURE HAS A GOOD LUCK CHARM or desire fulfilling instrument. Europe evolved the wishing well that grants spoken wishes. The Chinese have a tree that confers wishes, and the Buddhists a jade ring. The Hindu seeks blessings from Kamadhenu—the wish-fulfilling cow.

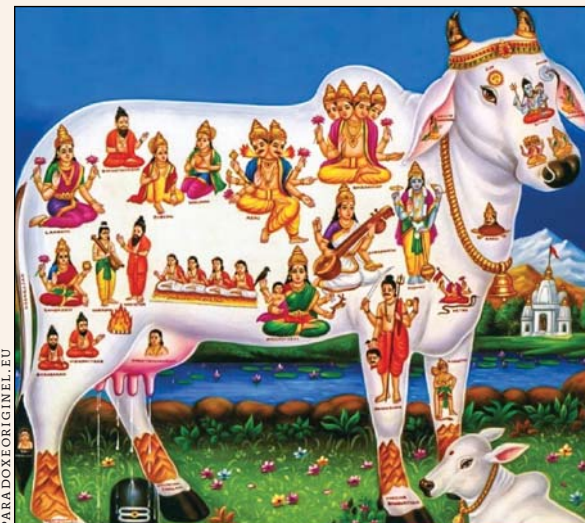
Kamadhenu or Kamaduh is the universal name for the sacred cow. She is regarded as a source of prosperity. The meaning of *kama* is cultural, intellectual and physical fulfillment. *Dhenu* is that which gives *trupti*—contentment and satisfaction. Kamadhenu is regarded as a form of Devi and is closely related to Mother Earth—Prithivi—who is often described as a cow in scripture. The cow denotes purity, protection, fertility, sacrifice and sustenance.

All the Gods are believed to reside in the body of Kamadhenu. Her four legs are

the *Vedas*; her horns are the Gods Brahma (tip), Vishnu (middle) and Siva (base); her eyes are Surya and Chandra; her shoulders are Agni and Vayu; every hair on her body is said to represent an enlightened Rishi.

Kamadhenu is often associated with brahmin priests, whose spiritual ideals she symbolizes. Cow's milk and its derivatives, such as ghee, are an integral part of the *homa*—Vedic fire worship. Thus, the ancient Kamadhenu is also referred to as *Homadhenu*—the cow from whom oblations are drawn. To the Hindu, every cow, or at least every breed of Desi cow, is regarded as a manifestation of the divine Kamadhenu.

Go Suktam, a hymn from the *Rig Veda*, offers homage:



"O revered cows, you fatten those who have become emaciated. With your pleasant and deep voice, make our dwellings replete with happiness and riches. Always in our congregation, your great and innate divinity is lauded."

BASICS

Unqualified Surrender

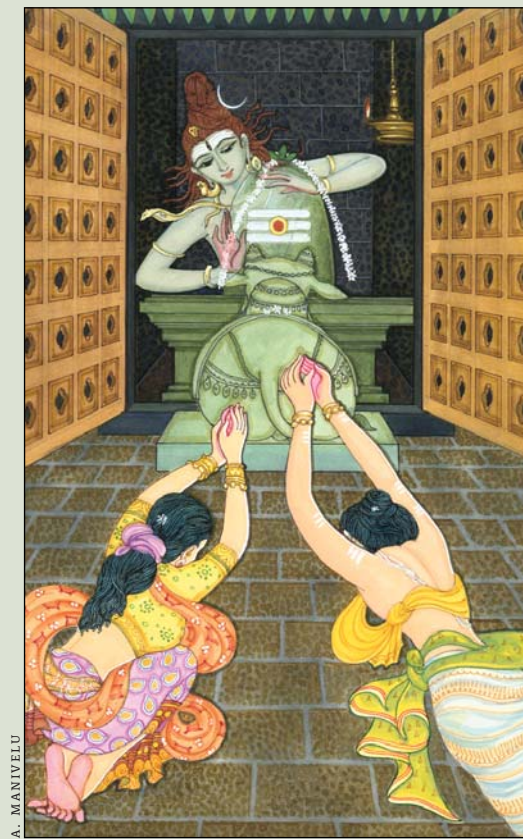
ONE IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE for the advancement of one's spiritual unfoldment is that of prostrating before God, Gods and guru, full body, face down, arms and hands outstretched, and in that act, total giving up, giving up, giving up. In Sanskrit it is called *pranipata*, "falling down in obeisance." What are these devoted ones giving up? By this act they are giving the lower energies to the higher energies. It is a merger, a blending.

When one is performing this traditional devotional act, awakening true *prapatti*—or total surrender—it is easy to see the lower energies from the base of the spine, the *muladhara chakra*, rising up the spine through all six chakras above it and out through the top of the head. It is transmuting, changing the form of, the base energies which breed conflict and resistance, "mine and yours" and "you and me," division, insecurity and separateness, into the spiritual energies of "us and we,"

amalgamation, security, togetherness.

Once the giving up of the lower is total—body prostrated before the image of God, Gods or Guru—those energies are surrendered into the higher chakras within the devotee, and it is a blissful moment, into the consciousness of "us and ours," "we and oneness," and inseparable love, thus claiming their individuality, not as a separate thing, but as a shared oneness with all.

Thereafter, these devoted ones, having been transformed, are able to uplift others, to harmonize forces around them that they work with day after day, year after year. This total surrender, *prapatti*, is the meaning of Siddhanta. This is the true meaning of Vedanta. The combination of both, and the pure practice of *prapatti* as just described, brings out from within the deeper meanings of Vedanta, the Vedic philosophy, without having to depend on the path of words, lectures and debates. (excerpted from *Merging with Siva*)

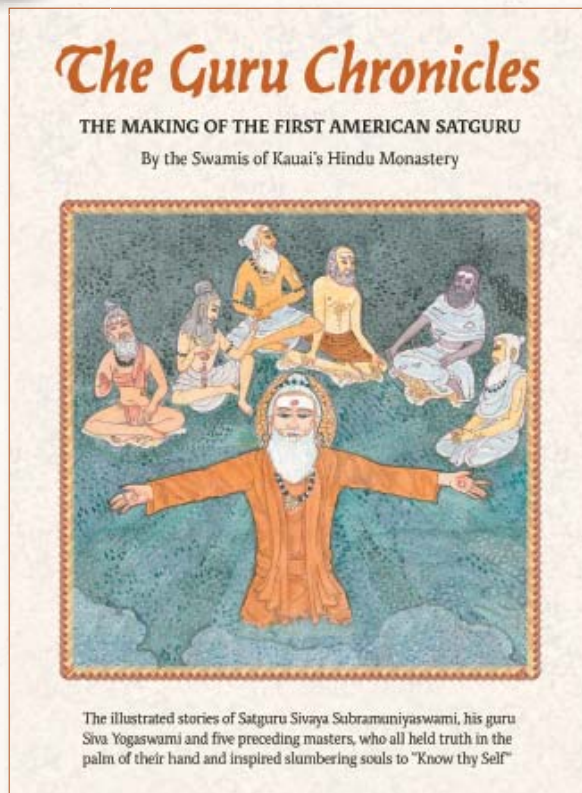


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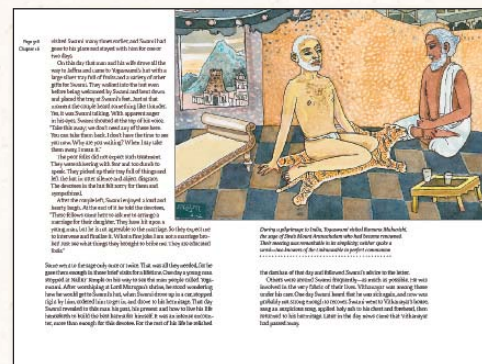


"Just now I completed the reading of the most powerful *Guru Chronicles*. What a rewarding experience! The design, contents and presentation of the most powerful book to awaken, most wonderful to inspire and the most informative to instill constant devotion to the eternal Guru Parampara are indeed superb and praiseworthy." **DR. S.P. SABHARATHNAM, CHENNAI**

"Deeply captivating. The book has a musical magic, a beautifully lyrical story that happens at once in the past and the present, with the promise of an ever-deepening future of awakening for the reader. It brings so vibrantly to life the simple life and deep spiritual culture of India and Sri Lanka. S. Rajam's art adds to the musical quality, as his work is rhythmic and lyrical, too." **SAVATRIKIAN, CALIFORNIA**



Here is an adventure into the rarely divulged world of spiritual masters, full of extraordinary stories, insights and spiritual encounters. At its heart is the untold life of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, who founded HINDUISM TODAY, his guru Siva Yogaswami and five preceding masters of the spiritual lineage. Illustrated by the South Indian genius, S. Rajam.



FROM THE VEDAS

Facing Forward in All Directions

Comprehending all things to be manifestations of the one Supreme Creator

The following is a lucid translation from the Yajurveda, chapter 31, verse 18 through chapter 32, verse 8.

BEFORE THE ESSENCE OF THE WATERS WAS DISTILLED BY VISHVA-karma (Purusha) for the creation of the Earth, the model of the universe existed in the eternal mind of the Purusha (ultimate, uncreated reality)—Prajapati Vishvakarma. Tvashta, the creator form of Purusha (or the aspect which is responsible for the act of creation), sculpted the universe. The human being's inherent divinity also existed in the eternal mind. That divinity Tvashta brought into existence as well.

I know this great and glorious Purusha of the brilliance of the Sun, beyond the dark. Having realized Him only, does man transcend the world of existence, birth and death. There is no other way than this to the final freedom of *moksha*, liberation from rebirth.

Prajapati, father spirit of the created universe, immanent and deep within the soul, moves everywhere; and although ever unborn, He variously manifests Himself as all the forms of life. Men of thought and wisdom feel His presence manifested all around. In Him alone do all the worlds of existence find their haven and repose.

To That which empowers the blazing of the Sun, giving sustenance to the divinities such as the Earth; to That who is the high priest and prime mover of the generous excellencies of the world, who rises first and foremost for the noble beings of the Earth; to that divine light our homage and offer of reverence.

The sages of yore, arising in vision of the divine glory, saw the light of the dawn and proclaimed of that: "O Brahmana, who would know you thus!" The lights of the world would be at his command.

Beauty is yours. Glory is yours. The day and night like consorts are at your sides. The stars and planets are your form incarnate. The Sun and Moon are your open face. Kind, loving and generous, give me that bliss of freedom, that supreme wealth of joy. Wish me all well and the world is mine.

The One Eternal Lord Supreme is Agni, self-effulgent and omniscient. That is Aditya, all-consuming upon annihilation. That is Vayu, omnipotent, all-sustaining. The same is Chandrama, blissful giver of joy. The same is Shukra, instant and immaculate. That is Brahma, greatest and infinite. That is Apah, immanent and omnipresent. He

is Prajapati, Lord of creation and father of all His children.

From the brilliant supreme Purusha are born all the divisions of time, from the first moment forth, as well as all movement from the first twinkling of the eye onward. No one can ever catch or hold this Lord, from above, middle or aslant.

There is none and nothing like Him, no picture, no icon, no simile, no metaphor. Great is His Name, mighty His glory. "He is the Golden Seed of the universe," it is apparent. "None will ever be born greater than He or exist beyond Him," such is the clear voice of the *Veda*.

Children of divinity, know that this glorious Lord of the universe

pervades all regions and quarters of space. First born, He is at the very center of the universe and resides in the depths of the soul. As existence, He continues to manifest every moment and abides everywhere, in everything, facing forward in all directions.

The glorious Lord is He, nothing was born before Him, nothing in all the worlds of the universe—which would come into existence later. Father and sustainer, He abides, rejoicing with His creation. As Lord of the sixteen powers of perfection, He pervades and feeds the lights of the Earth, sky and heaven.

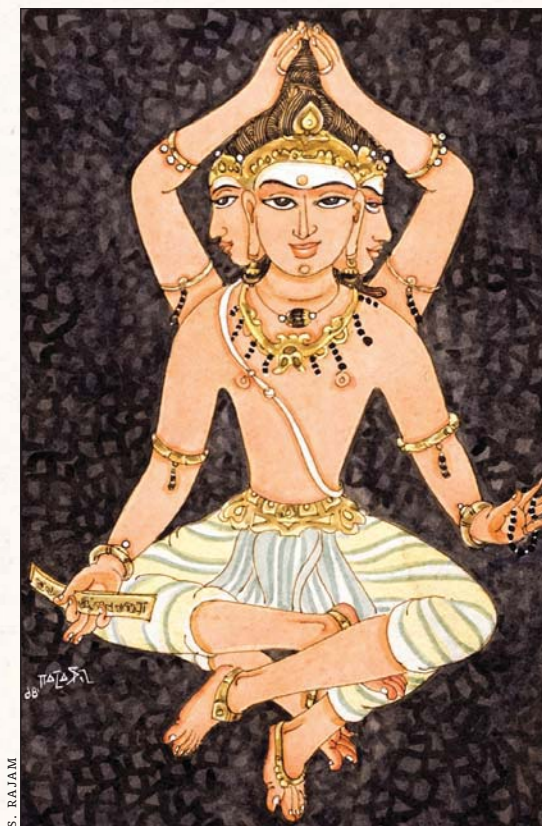
By Him the heavens blaze. By Him the Earth is firm. By Him the heaven of bliss is sustained, and by Him the ecstasy of *moksha* is constant. He is the creator of the worlds in space. Let us worship that Lord of glory and eternal bliss, and let us sing in honor of Him with the fragrance of *yajna*.

To Him the heaven and Earth, both constant and moving in ecstasy at heart, do homage with awe and reverence. Under His eye does the Sun rise and blaze with light. To that Lord of awe and glorious bliss let us offer our homage of praise and worship with love and faith. Whatever the vast oceans of water and whatever the expansive spaces, all exist in Him.

The man of vision and wisdom sees that eternal spirit hidden in mystery, where the universe lies nestled in His

presence. Therein all this comes into being together and therein it falls asunder. Infinite is He, immanent and omnipresent in the created beings.

This excerpt is from the 2013 *Veda* translations in English done by DR. TULSI RAM, London, UK. All four *Veda* translations are available for purchase online at agniveer.com



Lord of Creation: Brahma—the creative aspect of the Purusha—is depicted with four faces, staring forward in each direction simultaneously, witnessing His awareness within all things



Saints parade Karuna Mai from the yagashala:
(left to right) Shri Suddhananda ji Maharaj, Jagannathpuri;
Subash Swami Maharaj; Maluk Pithadhiswar Dwaracharya
Shri Rajendra Das Ji Maharaj; Shri Vitthal Krishna, Godham
sevak; Ba, a Pathmeda cow caretaker; Shri Gopraja
(holding Karuna Mai's halter); volunteers and guests

SPECIAL FEATURE

Behold Bharat's Blessed Bovine

Join our intrepid correspondent for the grand festival of Gounavratrī in Rajasthan, held in November of 2014 at India's largest cow shelter

LAST OCTOBER OUR EDITOR, PARAMACHARYA Sadasivanathaswami, received an urgent call from Swami Gopal Sharan Devacharya (HINDUISM TODAY's Hindu of the Year, 2009) to join him and dozens of other swamis for the culmination of a nine-day festival honoring cows at the Shree Pathmeda

Godham Mahatirth in Rehsil, Rajasthan, and the nearby Manorama Goloktirth in Nandgaon. The extraordinary event revealed the persistent reverence the Hindu community has for the cow, and highlighted efforts to protect the species and to craft a compassionate place for the holy bovine in a threatening modern world.



Wanting to fully share this unusual event with our readers, we assigned our chief correspondent for India, Rajiv Malik, to travel with Paramacharya and write the story. But the day before he was to depart for Rajasthan, Rajiv fractured his wrist. His 27-year-old daughter, Palak, a videographer and journalism graduate, seeing her father's predicament, volunteered on the spot to take his place—little knowing what she was getting herself into. Palak bravely dove into the story and inadvertently gave us a glimpse into what happens when a modern city girl from New Delhi wanders into rural Bharat to be among the cows.

BY PALAK MALIK,
PATHMEDA, RAJASTHAN, INDIA

WHEN PARAMACHARYA SAID, "IT WILL be an adventure," I looked at him in disbelief. It was only because a sense of duty prevailed that I agreed to step into my dad's shoes after his accident. Having committed to venturing into the interiors of India in the company of saffron-clad swamis to cover a festival that involved worshipping a lot of cows, I picked up my iPhone to put my videography work on hold and shift my weekend party plans.

It has been argued time and again that there exists a great divide between India and

Bharat. India is the economic giant that you read about in business journals, the one that prowls in cities and has made massive progress in technology, industry and lifestyle. I live in the capital city of that India, New Delhi, where I pick up a coffee at Starbucks before heading out for each day's work. For entertainment I visit malls and go to movies with my friends.

But suddenly I was to visit the fabled land of Bharat, the cow-worshipping, tree-hugging, agriculture-based society of rural India, full of exotic cultural practices until now delivered to my impressionable brain almost entirely by television, movies, books and the Internet.

Entering Village India

DAY 1 The nearest airport to Pathmeda, our destination, is in Ahmedabad, 250 kms away. We flew into the city at 2 pm from Delhi on October 29. This is the hometown of Prime Minister Modi, and as such it has been blessed with world-class highways on which we zoomed out of town. But as we left Gujarat and entered Rajasthan, the roads abruptly deteriorated until we were bumping along at bare minimum speed on unpaved lanes, dodging pot holes and goats. It took four and a half hours to reach our destination, the last hour of which was an ordeal.

The rules of the road here are different from Delhi: each goat, bull or cow has a free



pass to maneuver as it may wish. It was clear that a machine—that is, the car—is an outsider in this rural terrain. The driver gave way to cattle herds without even honking. Initially I was restless, but then I began to breathe more easily in the postcard-like countryside that we were passing in slow motion. Eventually I settled into the timelessness of this country.

For the last 30 miles we were swallowed in darkness. The road and countryside were unlit between us and the distant town of Nimbaj itself, our guiding light. Despite the bumpy road, I started to doze off. Then I was woken from a dream-like state by welcome shouts and chants from a raucous group of some twenty brahmacharis as we entered the premises of Manorama Goloktirth Nandgaon. They were jumping up and down in the back of a flatbed truck, happy the swamis from Hawaii had finally arrived. It was a surreal welcome. They leapt down, still shouting and chanting, garlanded us, and then we followed them along the wide sandy path they called a road to our quarters.

While the swamis and photographer Arun Mishra of Mumbai were expected, I was not, and there was quickly an issue as I was requested to get out of my city dress code of jeans and jacket to change into "religiously appropriate" Indian clothes. The minute I encountered the women devotees they told me to drape a sari, as this was the expected norm or uniform for women. I guess I was willing to blend in a bit, if that was the only way I

could do the story. But in my mind, I could either drape a sari and look pretty, or I could work. I settled for salwaar kameez to respect their sensibility while ensuring my mobility.

Manorama Goloktirth is one of several cow shelters established in the last 20 years by Swami Dutt Sharananda. Most of the festival events were taking place here, though we would also visit Pathmeda, the original and still largest facility. The term *shelter* hardly does justice to these massive operations, which hold hundreds of thousands of cows and include complete veterinary hospitals for their care as well as modern milk-processing facilities. These are not passive care facilities; they are engaged in concerted efforts to preserve the main breeds of Indian cow, also called the Desi cow, which are genetically better suited to the climate than any of the more recently introduced foreign breeds. Importantly, this group gives away girl calves to local families in an effort to lift them economically. The generosity is mind-boggling. In 2013 they gifted over 52,000 heifers to local families, and then taught them how to care for the animals. Villagers are also provided a commercial network through which to sell the products of their cows. This outreach has significantly improved the local economy.

Evening Arati

The festival had been going on for several days when we arrived, so we simply joined

in with the evening arati. I grew up in an staunchly religious Hindu household in which *arati*—worship with oil lamps—is a routine activity. But nothing had prepared me for what I encountered as I entered the huge yagashala structure set up for the event: 64 cows adorned with accessories, completely calm and decorated to the hilt, were being honored with such fanfare, including the worship with oil lamps, that I had previously thought reserved for the Deities. The cows, dressed in neon-colored clothes and silver ornaments, were complemented by the priests in shades of saffron as they conducted the prayer.

No doubt cows are revered all over India, and now when I look back I do remember the unusual encounters wherein I have seen people worshipping one or two odd cows on a city street. But here even the simple hello was cow-related. I speak Hindi, but I had to adjust to the dialect peculiar to this region. Each one greeted the other with "Jai Gaumata. Jai Gopal."

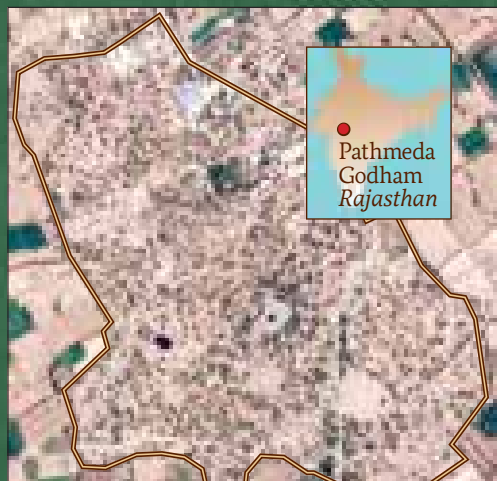
What was stunning here was the sheer scale of the organized event. The yagashala itself was easily 150 feet on a side. As I circumambulated the thatched chamber with the local villagers, I clicked a few images with my phone and quickly updated my friends in Delhi about my exotic experience. We did three rounds of the yagashala, with the devotees placing a hand on each cow's rump for blessing. There were also two Nandis,



Pathmeda Godham. . .

Home to 125,000 Desi Cows

(left to right): one of the Desi cows honored during the festival; Google Earth view of Pathmeda Godham's arid 50-acre site, which cares for 125,000 cows and includes a cow hospital and a nearby modern milk processing plant; Paramacharya Sadasivanathaswami (kneeling) and Sannyasin Yoginathaswami of Kauai Aadheenam try to feed a 19-year-old who is feeble and started refusing food





ALL PHOTOS: DINODIA.COM/ARUN MISHRA

massive Brahma bulls, fortunately as calm as the cows, for these are powerful animals that could cause harm if they wanted to. Many devotees, including me, gave them a wide berth.

Someone explained to me that when Lord Krishna was moving from Mathura to Dwarka, He was so impressed by the fertile land here that He spent the four months of Chaturmas (the monsoon season, when travel is difficult) in this very forest, donating cows to the local villagers. After this, He proceeded to Dwarka. They believe that Lord Krishna's visit inspired a cow protection movement of such magnitude to begin from this desert land. In scripture, the area is called Anandvan—the Forest of Joy.

Sadasivanathaswami and Yoginathaswami

were invited to sit with the other saints beside the 43-year-old founder, Swami Dutt Sharnanand, a tall, fit swami with a red turban and deep, compassionate eyes (which we cannot show, as photos of him are never permitted.)

Sadasivanatha sat next to Swami Prajnananandaji Maharaj of Shri Hariharananda Gurukulam in Jaganath Puri. He is a delightful swami who is on more or less permanent mounam, silence. He conversed using a small high-tech writing tablet, on which he wrote that he reads every issue of HINDUISM TODAY.

A massive effort: (counter-clockwise from above) Inside and outside the half-acre yagashala where worship is performed over several days for 64 representative cows; each pen at Pathmeda Godham holds about 100 cows and is cared for by one family; understanding the Desi cow; with great fanfare the cows are paraded to the yagashala.

In the days ahead, he helped the Hawaii swamis follow what was going on, as many conversations were in Hindi.

They were next taken to meet the most respected swami here, Swami Rajendra Dasji, of the Ramananda tradition. He is said to know fully all the sacred texts nearly by heart, plus he is a musician and master kathak performer—the best in the world, they tell us. Swami conducts kathak daily here for four to five hours, sitting cross-legged and ramrod straight on stage the whole time without moving; he later told us he does so 300 days



in every year. Dozens more swamis were introduced, several of whom have dedicated their life to cow protection. One has bullet wounds from his efforts to rescue cows from smugglers. Nearly all the swamis here were of a Vaishnavite lineage, with our Saivite swamis providing a nice complement.

I was not the only outsider immersed in this exotic experience in Anandvan. Among the devotees were not just the local villagers but hundreds of NRIs who had traveled from across the world to be here for the nine-day festival called Gounavrat, or nine nights for the cow. This elaborate event culminates on the eighth day, called Gouashtami, and continues for one day afterwards. It is similar to Navratri, the nine days of Goddess worship.

My heart was overwhelmed by the scale of celebrations, but my mind was looking for some rationale, which was provided when I met Dr. Ram S. Garg over supper. He is a neurologist who had traveled 13,000 kms from Philadelphia with his wife Mini Garg just to be a part of this event. The duo are devout cow worshipers, and offered this explanation: "Rajasthan is a desert. Only with the help of cow products like cow dung and urine has it become a fairly fertile land. In addition to enriching Mother Earth, the cow itself has been raised to the status of a mother as it provides us with milk that is full of nutrition."

As we spoke together, food was served that consisted of a variety of milk-based products.



The server insisted that I add an extra dollop of pure Desi ghee to the khichdi dish of rice and lentils. Everyone else at the table joined in to convince me of ghee's health benefits. I reluctantly gave in to the peer pressure, thinking it possible that I'll look like a cow myself by the end of this festival. The ghee tasted divine, and—setting aside any caloric concerns—I went for a second helping!

"Back Home" with the Internet

After dinner, I was instructed to proceed to a luxury tent where I was to stay. It was warm and welcoming, and super fancy by village standards. Only when I logged onto the Internet to do some research did I feel at home.

I googled "cow culture of India." The results were contradictory. Some scholars defended this traditional ecosystem and praised the cattle economy, while others refuted it. Even

the history seemed muddled. On one hand cow is mentioned as a sacred animal in the Vedas, but on the contrary—according to some scholars—certain verses reference the sacrifice of cattle. Some texts gave credit to Buddhism or Jainism for introducing the concept of ahimsa; others say it was part of Hinduism long before those religions appeared. I spent the night struggling with these opposing thoughts and ideas.

Before I went to sleep, I put on multiple alarms and even texted a few friends to wake me up in time. I'm a night person, and back in Delhi I never wake up before noon, unless it is a work requirement—which is rare, because as a freelance videographer I usually set my own schedule. This was going to be a challenge, to be up and dressed by 6:30am!

How It All Began

DAY 2 To my surprise, I woke up early to the beating of drums in the background and felt pumped up to join in the celebration of cow life. The day's program was to travel to the original cow shelter of Pathmeda Godham near the town of Sancho, about a 90-minute drive away. The 50-acre Godham houses tens (many tens) of thousands of cows, all pure Indian stock, plus the Dhanvantari hospital facility—so named after Dhanvantari, the form of Lord Vishnu who is God of Ayurvedic medicine. We traveled with three busloads of foreign visitors and devotees

Five-Star Cow Care Facilities



What Makes the Desi Cow so Different?

Bos indicus, or Zebu, is regarded by her admirers as more deva than brute. The specie is unique in both temperament and conformation. She boasts a large fatty hump at the shoulders, drooping ears, a pendulous fleshy dewlap at the throat and a special shape in the rear end. Additionally, experts will point out a long streak down the spine, which is light in dark cows and dark in lighter ones.



Prize Zebu bull with floppy ears



Dewlap



Large hump



Backside contours



Spinal streak



on a day-long official VIP tour. The country lanes are narrow, just wide enough for one car. When two large buses met on our road, one had to back up hundreds of yards to the nearest intersection to allow the other to pass. I was in the wilderness.

I'm not exaggerating when I say this countryside Bharat sojourn made me time travel into the golden age of Indian cinema of 1970s. Indian art films produced in the post-Independence era reflected the sociopolitical reality of rural India, the core script revolving around agrarian crisis and revolution. Many song and dance sequences were composed around agricultural themes such as praising Mother Earth, tilling the land with bulls and celebrating a good harvest season.

I imagined myself in the midst of Shyam Benegal's famous 1976 film *Manthan* ("The Churning"), co-produced by 50,000 farmers of the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Federation. The film showcased the crisis of milk production and formation of a milk cooperative in a village. But the real-life scenario at Pathmeda Godham is much larger than anything portrayed in the now obsolete 35mm film era.

The Godham currently cares for 125,000 cows. Over the years it has donated another 170,000 cows to farmers in over 500 villages. But I'm told it all started with eight cows sometime around 1995, when villagers discovered some butchers taking truck loads of cows to a slaughterhouse in Pakistan. Out of that lot the original eight cows were rescued by the villagers.

They took the cows to the nearby ashram of Swami Sri Dutt Sharnanand ji Maharaj. The villagers apparently assumed that since the swami was living in the forest, he could



DEPOSITPHOTOS

easily manage the cows, who could forage for themselves. Swami Dutt Sharnanand went on to personally rescue thousands of cows and eventually founded Pathmeda Godham. He explained, "Our sanskaras were such that we believed *dhenu* (cow) and *dharti* (Earth) are holy and codependent on each other. If *dhenu* is not there, then *dharti* will become barren and poisonous. If the Earth is not there, then the cow will have no grazing ground. I found out that 60,000 cows were being slaughtered daily, or 22 million per year—this out of a total Indian cow population of 120 million. It was shocking to discover this mass smuggling. With the belief that cow protection is good for the world, we started this movement."

Swami is a genuine hero among those who love cows in India. He has always been a strict brahmachari who rises at 2:30am, eats only vegetables (no grains) and only once each day.

He has never sought acclaim; even today he does not permit his photo to be taken. His life's work started in earnest back when he was in his late 20s and came to know for the first time—with the unexpected arrival of those eight cows—of the illegal trafficking in Rajasthan, where lorries carrying cows were being smuggled out of India under the cover of night and across the border into Pakistan. There they were slaughtered, and the meat, usually halal, was shipped to various countries, including back into India.

The young swami decided to continue the rescue effort the villagers had started. Each night he went to the border area and stood in the middle of the road to stop the lorries. When they came to a halt, his compatriots would unlatch the lorry's back gates and release the cows into the desert. The lorry drivers could not cry foul to the police, because they themselves were breaking the law. Again and again, lorries were stopped and their living cargo liberated, saved from a certain death. As the free-ranging cow population grew, so grew the needs for nutrition, medical care and birthing assistance. The response to those needs gave rise to a small goshala, which today has arguably become the world's largest cow shelter.

We learned from Swamiji that the cow named Samridhi, worshiped on the last evening, was the 21st offspring of Manorma, one of those original eight rescued cows. In Bharat, sometimes the prosperity of a family is evaluated in terms of how many children a mother can bear. In this case, Samridhi was testimony to how well the *gauvansh* (cow lineage) was progressing.

We walked in the sand (there seems to only be sand in Rajasthan) for almost an hour in



Seeking Economic Sustainability

ANURADHA MODI HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN THE animal rights movement since 1975: starting one of Delhi's first animal shelters, working to ban the use of wild animals in circuses, protesting the dissection of live animals in schools and initiating the country's first program of birth control for stray dogs. After leaving her animal welfare activities to raise her family, she returned to the work in 2012, focusing on the pitiable conditions of India's indigenous cows. With the support of her husband and family, she founded the Holy Cow Foundation (www.facebook.com/HolyCowFoundation) to develop and promote economically sustainable systems of cow protection and care. Her work resulted in a line of products (photo below) produced by cow shelters or *gaushalas*. Most of the following is condensed from her interview with *The Speaking Tree* in 2013 (bit.ly/ModiHolyCow); a few questions were asked by HINDUISM TODAY.



example, it is unfair if we keep all the milk for ourselves and leave nothing for the calf. However, a farmer will only take care of the cow if he gets something in return.

How can we improve the condition of cows in India?

It's important to remember our country's culture and ethos. We appeal to every family to support at least one cow, which costs ^{US}\$250/year. People should support the *gaushalas* on the outskirts of Delhi that look after old and injured cattle. Also, don't throw food in plastic bags into the streets. Stray cows will eat the bag along with the food in it. The plastic accumulates in their stomach—often over a hundred

pounds of it—and causes a slow death. The new government has offered a glimmer of hope, especially the Clean India Mission program which includes ridding the streets of plastic bags.

How do you raise cow protection awareness?

We organize the Holy Cow Music Festival in Delhi each year, featuring spiritual music to revitalize the body, stimulate the mind and pamper the soul. It is a platform which allows us to build awareness towards a common social initiative to serve and protect the Desi cow through economic sustainability. We promote organic produce and vegetarianism at the festival. We create a barnyard so children can come and touch the animals and see that they are living things and not something we should be eating.

How did government policies effect these concerns?

The problem for our indigenous cows started with the Green and White Revolutions in India in the 1960s and 70s. At that time India was struggling to meet the needs of its burgeoning population. It saw the developed nations as its role model and started copying the West without realizing the Indian ethos is totally different. What we needed was village development. The Green revolution bought fertilizers, pesticides and tractors to render cows and bulls useless for agriculture.

The White Revolution to increase milk production bought in strains of high yielding European breeds. There was disregard for the distinction between A1 and A2 milk. It has been found that the European breeds produced A1 milk, which is less healthy than the A2 milk of the desi cow. It is hypothesized that a mutation in European breeds in the last few thousand years has changed the

beta-casein they produce, from the more easily assimilated A2 beta-casein to A1 beta-casein, which is harder for the human digestive system to deal with and possibly linked to several common diseases. [See bit.ly/Snowville for evidence in favor of this theory and bit.ly/EJCN-A2 for evidence against.]

Around 2009, the previous government declared a Pink Revolution to modernize and expand the meat trade. As of 2015, India is the world's largest exporter of beef (including buffalo meat or carabeef), nearly reaching two million metric tons a year, much of it halal. This Pink Revolution is the death knell of the cow in India.



HOLY COW FOUNDATION

Cow products: Each item above is made with one or more of the five products of the cow

What inspired you start the Foundation?

I have always loved animals. Once I saw a pamphlet on *gaugraas* rickshaws which went door to door to pick up leftover rotis and vegetable peels to feed to cows. I sponsored one for our residential colony. Later I came across ayurvedic products made from cow dung, but they were badly packaged, so no one would buy them. One thing led to another and I started the Holy Cow Foundation to protect the indigenous Indian cow.

What are the challenges in rehabilitating cows?

When a cow goes dry, the farmer turns it out on the streets, or sells it for slaughter, even where cow slaughter is illegal. Earlier, in every village, there was *gau-char* land (protected pastures) where such cows could graze. Gradually, *gau-char* lands were used for agriculture or buildings.

What items can be made?

The five things that a cow gives are: dung, urine, milk, curd and ghee. All the five combined together are *panchgavya*. We produce incense, agnihotra kits for fire worship, toiletries, joint pain oil, chyanprash, urine distillate, and pure ghee nasal drops. We make logs out of cow dung for cremation or as fuel in factories and boilers. We make pots of dried cow dung for decorative plants. Bio-gas and compost are other by-products of cow dung. Instead of using pesticides and urea, farmers can use composted manure.

What are the special properties of ghee?

It is said that pure desi cow ghee lowers cholesterol. Doctors in the West have recognized the benefits of ghee [see, for example, the US National Institutes of Health paper, bit.ly/NIHghee].

What do you think about veganism?

People turn vegan to avoid cruelty and exploitation of animals. For

Turning the Five Products of the Cow into Cash



(above) Rajasthani farmers delivering milk to a collection facility—a common sight on the roads here; (below, left to right) Packing dried milk from the modern milk processing facility; making milk-based sweets; hand-filled cans of ghee, a popular export, ready for sealing



ALL PHOTOS: DINODIA.COM/ARUN MISHRA



and around the expansive cow sheds. Each held 100 cows, along with water troughs, feeding stations, salt licks and lime. In my life, I had never seen so many cows together. As far as the eye could see, there were cows. In all directions! Our group enthusiastically chanted "Gomata, Gopala" in loud unison as they bravely marched (in full sari regalia) under the hot sun with clouds of dust billowing around them.

Our guide was Govats Shri Radha Krishna Ji Maharaj, a charming exponent of katha (since age 16), kirtan, cow protection and more, all in the name of Lord Thakurji, as Krishna is worshipped in the Vallabhacharya lineage (see: radhakrishnaji.com). He is fond of *parbhat feri*, "early morning walk," the

practice of beginning the day chanting and spreading the name of Thakurji to the people. Just 31, he is already a popular spiritual personality who works closely with Swami Sharanand. Among other programs he conducts an annual five-day summer camp for 15 to 25-year-olds that attracted 1,000 youth last year. He has currently taken on the vow of Gayatri Mahapurushcharanin under which he lives only on milk for 16 months.

Shri Radha Krishna explained that the number of cows in the Godham varies depending on the inflow and outflow. Rajasthan is a famine-prone area, and during droughts many farmers abandon their cows. At the Godham the cows cohabit the land with *gopals* (cow caretakers) and their families,

making it a sustainable proposition. The cows are not tied; they are allowed to roam freely within the large pens. Swami said he did not want to save the cows from execution only to sentence them to life imprisonment; rather he insists they live in as natural surroundings as possible.

The Cow Hospital

The Godham runs a huge hospital capable of treating 4,000 cows at once in three giant sheds. They have a massive x-ray machine and operating room, and even a cow ambulance. "Not many people are aware that cows suffer the same kinds of diseases that afflict human beings. They have metabolic disorders, uterus and respiratory disorders. They even have cancer, psychological and neurological disorders," explained Rishi Jay Prakash, one of our hosts and treasurer of this Dhanvantri medical facility. Traffic accidents are a frequent cause of injury, and cows arrive from time to time with gunshot wounds.

On this day there were about 1,000 in the hospital area. Once healed, they are returned to the village farmers. "In fact, we don't want all the sick cows to be sent here whenever there is a drought or famine. It is cruel to transport a seriously injured cow, so Swami-ji's idea is to create units at the village level for this purpose," Rishi explained.

Nearly all the doctors serve on a voluntary basis, working with an annual budget of US\$100,000 for medicines, much of them ayurvedic. I confess, I found the hospital grim, and I noticed our Sadasivanathaswami and Yoginathaswami retreating to a nearby neem tree outside to avoid the sadness of the place.



buffalo (which are a major source of milk in India). Swami Rajendra Das, the kathak performer, told us that the cow described in the *Vedas* is clearly the Indian breed. There are four distinguishing features to the Desi cow, he explained: 1) a hump on the cow's back; 2) a fleshy neck wattle; 3) a white streak that goes along the entire spine (in light skinned cows this streak is dark) which is said to draw the power of the sun into the cow and into her milk; and 4) a distinctive shape to the cow's rump. Compared to the Desi cow, which is gentle and non-threatening to humans, all other cattle breeds, Swami said, are mere "beasts." Our experience is that these gentle creatures are indeed different in temperament, almost like a pet, and quite affectionate.

I did look this up once back in Delhi, and in fact, according to Wikipedia, there is a considerable difference between the European and Indian cattle breeds. Both are descended from the now extinct auroch, *Bos primigenius*, which was found in Europe and Asia in ancient times. About 200,000 years ago, the Indian auroch, *Bos primigenius namadicus*, evolved as a subspecies in India. Around 7000 bce, it was domesticated as the zebu bovine, *Bos indicus*, which is exactly the Desi cow described in the *Vedas*. The European aurochs were separately domesticated about 6000 bce in the Middle East and are the ancestors of all European taurine cattle breeds, *Bos taurus*. The last European auroch died in 1627 in Poland, while Indian aurochs became extinct about 2000 bce.

Swami went on to explain there is a great difference in quality of milk, ghee, dung, urine, etc., between the Indian breeds and

The more courageous visitors stayed in the sheds, sitting on the sand in their expensive saris, chanting or singing softly to the cows who clearly enjoyed the attention. It is taught here that, like a person, a cow will heal noticeably faster if it feels cared for and loved. The swamis and I reflect that these are the most fortunate of hurt cows on the Earth. One said he'd never seen ahimsa practiced at such a high level. Every effort was made to avoid hurting the cows, and it made him change the way he looked at them.

Sustaining the Operation

With little or no support from the government, the mere existence of this huge ecosystem is a miracle. They have storage capacity for 500 trucks of fodder, but due to paucity of funds, purchase of sufficient fod-

der is a day-to-day challenge.

After lunch we were taken to a huge modern milk processing factory. The Godham itself has only a few thousand cows producing milk, all of which is consumed on the premises. For the processing factory, milk is purchased from 16,000 farmers from 500 villages and packaged as dried milk or processed into ghee, sweets, etc. Bhupendra Chippa, manager of this unit, said about 40,000 liters of milk were coming in daily at the moment, and this can go up to 100,000 liters during the peak season. The factory aims for a fair return to the farmer, while the minimal profits go toward the Godham's operating expenses. The operation employs 200 people.

The Godham insists that the milk only come from the indigenous, or Desi, cow, and not from imported breeds or from water

Bovine Party in Full Swing

(clockwise from top left) Swamis and devotees gather for the day's kathak performance—a combination of story telling and devotional singing; cow ambulance arrives with a patient, though the Godham prefers to avoid transporting cows on the rough roads in favor of treating them where they live; (inset) visiting devotees comfort an injured cow in the hospital; the ladies' side of the kathak tent; men spontaneously dance during the kathak



Cow Protection: America Is Far Behind

By BOBBIE SRINIVASAN, PENNSYLVANIA

THERE ARE TWO MAIN MODES OF COW PROTECTION IN THE USA. One is what I and thousands of other animal activists do daily: educate people around the world about the horrors of the dairy industry, and beg everyone to adopt a vegan lifestyle. The second mode is to rescue cows and give them shelter for the rest of their lives. Doing either in the US is particularly difficult because there's no national, prolific love of the cow as is the case in India. When you talk about saving a cow, you're more likely to be laughed at.

In the US, where a cow is slaughtered every 12 seconds, she is not considered a living, loving being. Instead, she is looked at as a commodity—no different than an onion. The World Bank estimates that the average American eats about 42 kg of beef a year. According to Farm and Range Guide, the net profit on a cow whose life lasts around 4.7 years (of her potential 20 years) comes to about \$2,600 after having about four calves. Because the industries that profit from her excretions, her muscles and her skin are huge and powerful, the system wherein the cow finds herself is deadly. This industry spends millions of dollars every year advertising their bloody product. They also pay a lot to change the very few animal "welfare" laws to favor their cruel "harvesting" practices.

I have found that those who rescue cows and start sanctuaries are brave, undaunted people. They spend their lives and savings doing everything they can to bring these animals to safety. Cows often become available for rescue, through some happenstance such as having fallen off of a slaughter transport truck or from escaping from the slaughterhouse. When this happens, the sanctuaries have to act fast and mobilize all their resources to bring the cow home. Just imagine all the time and money needed to make that happen. But they do it every chance they get. Unfortunately, you'll notice, by doing a simple query on the Web of "escaped cows," the outcome is rarely this good.

In all, the best way to protect cows is to convince people to adopt a vegan lifestyle. It is her milk and body after all—not ours. So, please, spread the word and educate everyone about the horrors of the dairy industry. By doing this, we'll all become cow-savers.

Bobbie Srinivasan is a full-time K-12 substitute teacher. In her spare time, she works on a website, VeganCookingLessons.org, teaching how to prepare meals without animal products, and is active in The Save Movement. Email: BoeDevi@gmail.com; Website: www.torontopigsave.org/



foreign breeds. Everyone I spoke with here told me the same thing: that consumption of the products of the Desi cow would improve our health and benefit the environment.

It was nearly 5pm when we made our last stop at the Nandi Goshala. Here 17,000 bulls and oxen are cared for, the largest such facility in the world. They call uncastrated bulls *Nandis*. We then drove back to Nimbaj.

Returning to my tent, I asked one of the brahmacharis where I could get hot water to take a bath, for we were about to attend the evening arati. He laughed and said, "You didn't take a bath in the morning, you city girl. I caught you! Haha." I wasn't sure how to react, for I didn't fully know the rules of the land, though it became clear that not taking a bath in the morning was a big deal. I was embarrassed, and advised to bathe with whatever tap water was available. Suitably cleaned up, I attended the evening arati, which was much the same as the night before.

Finally back at my tent after a very long day, I checked my email, made a few phone calls and stuffed myself with several delicious chocolate brownies a friend had provided. It was some solace for the lack of coffee here, which I was sorely missing. I finally tucked myself into the massive quilt and switched off the lights. I was startled at first by the huge shadows made on the side of the tent by the night guards as they walked about. Even the small passing dogs appeared like wolverines. I had heard a lot of village ghost stories as a child, and they were all coming back to me. Fortunately, I soon fell asleep.

Worshipping the Amla Trees

DAY 3 I was awakened by someone banging on the cloth door of the tent and requesting I come for morning puja. Having learned my lesson, I quickly bathed, as I wanted to keep my conscience clear in this atmosphere where people literally breathe religion. Here in conservative India, religious rituals are sacrosanct, and, as I had learned, bathing in the morning is one of them. In the city I take a bath whenever I wish, once in 24 hours.

By 7am, hundreds of devotees are already in the yagashala, walking around the cows, rubbing their legs, doing arati to them. Each cow is officially in the care of one or two families, who are given large bowls of a sweet feed mix to offer their charge. Today the cows are less eager to eat the offerings, perhaps because they have feasted for the previous seven days on this sweet grain goodie. Devotees offer a cricket-sized ball and seem seriously disappointed when the cow turns blithely away from their outstretched hand. They could take some solace from the fact that all the unconsumed offerings of food go to the other cows at Pathmeda.

Today, unlike previous days, the dozens of priests are dressed in fresh white and red dhotis and have tripundra on their forehead instead of the Vaishnava marks. Our two swamis are offered a seat next to the Pathmeda founder. We all sit in the sand (remember, there is only sand in Rajasthan, no soil) near a cow, and a special offering begins with the arrival of large open pots filled with ripe amla fruits. We offer a huge quantity of amla fruits, one at a time, in synchronicity with the mantras of the priests. It all ends with

an arati, hundreds of trays of lamps in the yagashala all at once. It is a fitting and strong crescendo.

We're next taken to a mature amla grove, the 250 trees laden with fruits. We are here to honor the trees for their gifts, and the organizers have 12 to 15 devotees sit around each tree. They follow the priests in making offerings, then worshipping with arati trays. It is a popular belief here that amla worship on this day destroys all sins. In any case, amla (*Phyllanthus emblica*) is well known for its medicinal properties and is used in many ayurvedic tonics and medicines.

Kathak

The group heads next to the giant tent where Swami Rajendra Das ji has held his four-hour kathak for eight days straight. Inside, there are some 1,200 devotees waiting. This is the ninth and last kathak, and there are dozens of accolades before the talks. Our two swamis are asked to address the audience, to speak of HINDUISM TODAY and Hinduism outside of India. The kathak follows, today going closer to five hours.

I decided to bunk the beginning of the long kathak, for I could, in any case, hear it from my tent. In the shimmering sunlight that was seeping in through the tent house, I took selfies and Whatsappped them to show off my luxurious accommodations to friends and family.

Later, I slipped in unnoticed to attend the second part of the kathak, sitting with local village women whom I had met the previous day. They are wives of farmers associated with Pathmeda Godham. They had come to be a part of this festival, to celebrate and



worship cows. They told me they all have cows at home, and spoke about them with love and affection, quite often referring to each by a nickname.

I asked them a lot of questions about life in the village, and they asked me about city life. It had been evident from our arrival the first night that my presence here, an unmarried woman, was considered unusual—to put it mildly. One asked, "How can you travel on your own without a man by your side?" Another, "How old are you? You're at the age to have kids, why aren't you married already?"

For once I didn't mind answering personal questions from strangers. A couple of ladies who had teenage girls studying in school came to my defense and said, "Education and work are equally important for both men and women." I wasn't sure how satisfied the rest of the ladies were by that explanation, but by the end of it, they put a bindi on my forehead, tied a rakhi thread around my wrist and called me "sister." They still phone me every now and then to check on my well-being.

The Leather Issue

Later that day at the evening arati in the huge yagashala, I noticed something unusual. The man in front of me removed his belt at the entry and dropped it into a box full of belts and wallets. The guard stationed nearby informed me that no leather product is allowed on the premises.

Rishi Jay Prakash explained that leather and bones are more profitable products of slaughter than the meat itself. "That is why our Maharaj ji says that if you want to save the cows, then stop using leather products."

According to him, laws banning cow

slaughter exist, but there are loopholes. For instance, in Maharashtra the law states that you can slaughter a cow when three conditions are met: if it is uneconomical for milk generation, uneconomical for farming and uneconomical for regeneration. "Now if we focus on products like cow dung and cow urine, every cow becomes productive. She is productive even if she's blind, deaf or suffering from ailments." Then, by law, she should be safe.

Everyone I interviewed spoke against cow slaughter, pleading that the government do more about it, at the very least to conduct slaughter in a more humane manner. But few held out much hope of government intervention and opted instead for a strategy of appealing directly to the people.

By the end of the evening I had spoken to dozens of people about cow slaughter and cow protection. To my shock, and even anger (I am not a fan of such divisions), many of them made this a communal issue about Hindu-Muslim differences—claiming that the Muslims are responsible for cow slaughter. In part, it was a historical argument, that Muslims invaded India and ate the cows Hindus worshiped, and, no doubt, most slaughter houses are operated today by Muslims. The cultural tension in this rural scenario was intense and is a major aspect of the core ideology behind saving the cows.

But this discourse is nonexistent in the context of the city. When we consider the end products and consumption patterns, it is an urban-rural divide and less so a religious one. For instance, most urban dwellers use leather products and I, for one, never thought I was killing a sacred Hindu cow by carrying a leather handbag. Was that enough to make

me a lesser Hindu? Most of the time we in the city do not know what goes into the making of the things we use or eat, nor do we pay attention to their environmental cost. Perhaps, I mused, it is time for us to reflect more on our choices and their consequences.

It was also only after I made this particular trip to Bharat that I began to seriously question the success of the Green and White Revolutions. In the school textbooks of India, these two are presented as glorious agricultural achievements. But what eventually became evident was that Bharat's ground reality is quite different from India's portrayed version. For someone like me who belongs to New India and takes full pride in these chapters of development and growth, this was a facepalm, an unwelcome revelation.

Cow Worship Full Scale

DAY 4 My last day at Pathmeda was Gouashtami, the festival's main day. The morning arati was a special one, and the devotee couples who had turned up from all over the world had to pre-book (at a hefty price) their seat beside one of the 64 cows. The elaborate puja began once all couples were stationed in front of their cow. Some three dozen pujaris were seated before a dozen homa kundas, the fires blazing. They chanted, led by two gifted Vedic priests who dominated the space with their resounding (and amplified) voices. The main offering this day was 125,000 bananas—more than I had ever seen at in my entire life. They were donated by local farmers and offered in the puja to the 64 cows in the yagashala on behalf of all the cows of Pathmeda. At 2,000 bananas per cow, it was

Scenes from the Cow Festival



(left to right) Luxury tent accommodations for the VIP visitors from India and abroad; Govats Shri Radha Krishna Ji Maharaj; Yoginathaswami (far right) joins in the feeding of amla fruit to one of the 64 cows





more than they could eat, despite the cows' best efforts—the uneaten ones were shared with the rest of the of Pathmeda's herd. In every corner of the yagashala, puja and arati were taking place.

As I snapped pictures, someone came up and asked me to take the *charna amrit* from a leaf bowl. This was obviously not the charna amrit sweet drink made from milk, curd, Ganga water and sugar I was familiar with, so I asked the ingredients before sipping it. It was, I learned, made from the five products of the cow: milk, curd, cow urine, cow dung and ghee. Now, I had heard people drink cow urine and that it has numerous medicinal properties, but I hadn't taken it seriously. I quickly put the bowl back on the table, pretended I had a phone call, and made a swift exit. For the next half hour I played hide and seek with this man at the prasad counter who insisted I should drink it. He had clearly sensed my apprehension, and I had grasped his. I'll never know what that tasted like.

The afternoon brought unfamiliar

experiences. At one place in the compound, villagers were coming up to a cow, and a priest was touching their heads with the cow's tail. He told me they believe that if you follow the cow's tail it can lead you to heaven. Maybe at some level I empathize with the cause of cow protection and preservation, but I couldn't adopt such foreign village ways. The rural-urban divide remained unresolved in me.

A touching event on this last day was the honoring of the gopal families with gifts. The head of each family charged with caring for the cows came on stage to accept a large-wheeled trunk filled with practical presents for the family, including blankets and clothes. Following this presentation, there was a colorful procession of the villagers with their decorated cows and bulls around the property (photo page 23). For the last time I joined my local village women friends as they walked along singing songs praising Lord Krishna as a cow herder. It was a calming end to an experience which had disrupted my city-bred ways of thinking.



Swami Dutt Sharnanand

It was after this evening's arati that we were allowed, finally, to interview Swami Dutt Sharnanand at length, in the presence of Sadasivanathaswami, Yoginathaswami, Rishi Jay Prakash and other swamis. The interview took place at a traditional five-room hermitage made of coconut thatch with a cow dung floor. It was the humble quarters where the swamis lived for these nine days. I was surprised that the floor was odorless and quite pleasant, more like a warm brown carpet than a cold wooden floor. It seemed a good use of an abundant resource.

Swami explained that treatment of the cow has been changing for the better in recent times. "In the year 2000 a lot of awareness was spread regarding cow protection and preservation," he said. "Around 5,000 cowsheds were established all over the country. Many states also enacted laws at that time related to protection of cows. So, in the past decade or two, a good momentum has picked up, and I feel that there is a super power who is making this happen, because, so far as we are concerned, we couldn't imagine that we would be able to make such a large impact."

"Still, more than 22 million cows are butchered in India each year, out of a total population of 120 million. On top of that are those that die of starvation during famines—I have seen thousands so perish. Many thought that when India achieved independence, cow protection would become common, but in fact the opposite occurred. The whole focus has been on industrialization as the means for the country to develop, but in the process we have ignored our cows and our villages."



"The *Brahma Samhita* says that those living in this world as cows can be divided into two types of souls. One will take rebirth as a human being after ending their lives as a cow, and others will get liberated and go to Goluk-dham—heaven. During their birth as a cow, no new sin is created, and their whole birth is dedicated to the welfare of humanity. Many born into a lower level of creature come and spend their life as a cow to purify their karmas and be eligible for a human birth next time. Definitely many being born as human beings would have lived as cows."

"We are not saying you should blindly use the products of the cow. Let us test them scientifically. I believe when cow dung is used in farming the various crops are very high quality, leading to healthy human beings and a healthy, poison-free environment. But the

people who are maintaining the cows are not getting the proper economic incentives. This we are trying to solve by promoting the quality and value of the products of the cow."

Rishi added, "Today if we take the population of Hindus in India as 975 million, if each Hindu family decides to take care of just one cow, the problem would be solved. If the Hindu community decides to seriously take up the project of cow protection, then there would be no problem at all."

Pethmetha's programs are already having a significant economic impact in the area. They have provided 50,000 heifers to the local villagers, and during the dry season, when few crops could be grown, the milk from just two of these can be a significant source of income for a small family.

Conclusion

Even though the experience was unique and memorable in every sense of the word, I was relieved when we reached the airport and civilization. As we boarded the plane, it struck me that I was wearing a leather jacket and leather shoes. Now back in the city, I haven't stopped wearing leather, but I have stopped buying it, for now. Every Delhi winter, I used to buy myself a new pair of good quality leather boots to add to my collection. This season, to my surprise, I didn't—perhaps an unexpected change of heart brought on by my time in the presence of the cows of Shree Pathmeda Godam Mahatirth.

Email the author at palakmalik1@gmail.com



(counter-clockwise from top left) Group of the gopal cowherders decked out for a festive parade; Swami Gopal Sharan Das at his New Delhi goshala as the temple Deities are paraded through the immaculate granite and stainless steel facility; some of the 125,000 bananas offered to the cows; cow puja at the Golden Temple in Vellore—for the full puja, go to bit.ly/Vellore; future plan of sheds and veterinary facility at Nandgaon, Rajasthan

Did You Know?

- India is the world's largest exporter of beef, over 2 million metric tons a year
- Every hair on a Desi cow is said to represent an enlightened rishi
- Desi and European cows separately evolved from the now extinct auroch 8-9,000 years ago
- They are used to assess land for auspiciousness. If they walk away, the project is abandoned.
- Anga Mantras used in puja relate the Deity with a mantra with a cow part

Honoring the Cow in Delhi, Rajasthan & Tamil Nadu....





PHOTOS: MARTUSHKA FROMEAST

My Journey with the Mother Goddess

The Nanda Devi Raj Yatra: one of the most difficult pilgrimages on Earth

BY MARTUSHKA FROMEAST, POLAND

LEGEND SAYS THAT LONG AGO THE GODDESS Nanda Devi left Her home in Nauti village in Karanprayag—east of Srinigar—destined for the snow-capped heights of what is today known as the Nanda Devi mountain, India's tallest peak. There She would be united with Her beloved, Siva, who resides at its summit. She was guided up the mountain's frozen face by a mystical four-horned ram on a journey that is reenacted every twelve years in the Nanda Devi Raj Yatra.

I first learned of this pilgrimage from a book I was gifted, *Mountain Goddess*, in which author William S. Sax tells of his experiences on the yatra, one of the world's longest, most difficult pilgrimages, leading tens

of thousands of devotees on a three-week, 173-mile trek up to the dizzying elevation of 16,000 feet. It courses over grassy foothills, through mountain meadows, along craggy cliffs and between frozen Himalayan peaks. Led by a four-horned ram, pilgrims carry the Goddess with them on a bejeweled palanquin, boldly facing the inhospitable weather of the region's rainy season.

With previous experience in the Himalayas, I bravely decided to join the trek. I was awed by the extreme preparations given by the government and local villagers. While you would hear occasional complaints of a dirty blanket or worn supplies, one couldn't help but marvel at the care given to the pilgrims. Twenty thousand people were provided food, security, health care and camping, all

for free. Some villages of no more than 100 houses supported thousands of pilgrims in one of the harshest environments on Earth.

Each Raj Yatra is declared only upon the birth of an auspicious *chausingha khadu*, a four-horned ram. In March of 2014 a male lamb, black in color, was born in Ladoli village in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district. Weeks later, as its horns began to grow, it became clear that he was the ram for which the Nanda Devi Raj Yatra Committee had been waiting. The yatra was announced. Per tradition, the royal family of Kansuwa village wove the raj chintoli—the first of many bamboo umbrellas, an emblem of the yatra—that would accompany Nanda Devi and the sacred ram up the mountain. When the yatra's pilgrims see the line of chintoli bearers, they



Arduous journey: (clockwise from opposite page) Pilgrims at the feet of Mount Trisul, winding toward Homkund; thousands of pilgrims gather at Chandpur Gari. At some locations along the route the group will number 100,000; the official four-horned ram is hugged by one of his caretakers; an elderly umbrella bearer, carried through the crowds, gives blessings. Apart from practical protection from the sun and rain, the chintoli are said to ward off demonic spirits and other malevolent energies.

know that Nanda Devi is near.

The yatra starts in Nauti village, where a golden murti of Nanda Devi is ceremoniously placed on Her palanquin, sheltered by the raj chintoli overhead. Following an elaborate havana and several pujas, the immense throng winds its way through a string of villages as it proceeds higher and higher to the sacred goal, Homkund, a remote glacial pond said to be one of the sources of the River Ganga nestled between the great Trishul and Nanda Ghunthi peaks at an elevation of 12,323 feet.

The 2014 yatra was originally scheduled for 2012, but was delayed two years due to weather and natural disasters. So we began on August 18th, 2014—five months after the birth of the four-horned ram. Along with the main palanquin, there were several smaller ones, Nanda Devi's divine sisters who together comprise the whole of Devi. The palanquins were usually carried by priests, often at an impressively quick pace. Almost running, the priests explained



that the shakti of the Goddess propelled and guided their steps over the rocky terrain.

At night the ram slept next to Nanda Devi—tired from carrying the Goddesses' gifts of jewelry, milk and other offerings received along the way. Never overburdened though, he enjoyed the loving attention of everyone who came near. Keen mountain trekkers, these sheep reach their destination as naturally trained guides, picking the safest and quickest paths through the treacherous terrain. The rare four-horned rams are considered the keenest of all.

At Nanda Kesari, eight more rams joined

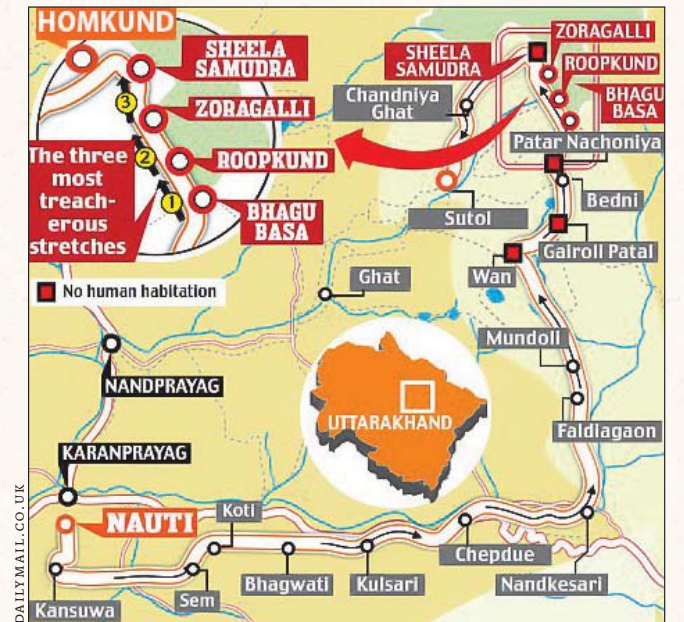
from different locations. Each was four-horned, but had not been chosen as the official holy ram. This determination is based on a variety of disqualifying factors, most importantly the timing of birth.

From the very start, the yatra takes on a life of its own. You become part of one giant religious body. As the event progresses, the days cycle by, the locations change and every village is new and unique, each presenting its own narrative and regaling you with folklore, songs and dances. Everything rotates around the center, Nanda Devi's divine journey.

The natural beauty is stunning. Begin-



Amazing vistas: (clockwise from above) a pilgrim worships in the icy waters of Bedni Bugyal pond, which was made artificially from the surrounding wetland; pilgrims travel through flowering meadows on the way to Patar Nachauniya; one of the mountain camps, Bedni Bugyal (according to legend, the Goddess escaped a demon here by submerging Herself in the pond below the shrine); Nanda Devi on Her palanquin. (clockwise on opposite page) Pilgrims stand with Nanda Devi and one of the four-horned sheep; a map showing the yatra route; a Raj Yatra shawl is held up by a pilgrim.



ning in flowery, tropical jungles, you eventually reach the heart of the mountain, a barren world of frozen stones and silence. Along the way I was enthralled by the mountain and the pilgrims. At any moment there were people praying and sometimes crying with love and devotion.

Being a foreigner and a woman, I was surprised at the warm, loving acceptance I received at each point along the journey. The region's deeply held respect for women is embodied in the faith and reverence for Nanda Devi in Himalayan lore. These village-to-village experiences of hospitality would repeat

themselves with distinction, until finally the yatra reached Wan—the last hamlet accessible by motored vehicles. Here we worshipped at the temple of Latoo Devata, the spiritual brother of the Goddess. He is revered only upon the arrival of Nanda Devi and Her pilgrims. The rest of the year, the temple doors are closed.

Leaving Wan, there are two choices: turn around and head home or brace yourself for the treacherous final climb. For their own welfare, pregnant women are asked to not go further than Wan. Beyond this point, articles made of leather are prohibited, for purity's

sake. Musical instruments are left behind, lest the sound start an avalanche. Saying goodbye to the last vestiges of civilization, bold pilgrims continue up the mountain with the Goddess.

High above the tree line is a true no man's land—a desolate world of swollen rivers, barren cliffs, dangerous, windswept passes and terrifying ice fields. We overnighted at numerous camps. One was Bedni Bugyal, the site of a small man-made lake. From this hilly spot one enjoys a glorious panorama of ridges and peaks, brightly lit by the vivid Himalayan sunlight. We reached Patar Nachau-



niya by passing through a surreal meadow of luminous grasses and rare mountain flowers, out of which arise monoliths of natural stone. Aside from the biting cold, the take-away from these nightly sojourns was a deep sense of freedom, which comes easily, being so close to the Gods. But there is also fear—a natural fear of being somewhere so remote, unpredictable and dangerous.

Just nights before reaching the famed Ropkund lake, I experienced one of the most difficult points in my journey. At this height, near 16,000 feet, headaches, nausea and acute mountain sickness are common. Suddenly we were hit by soaking rains. Everyone and everything was drenched, including all our clothes, sleeping bags and tents. Only after hours of suffering and shivering to my core

did I finally fall asleep. Upon waking the next day, I deeply considered turning back, as I truly felt my life was at risk. But I had come too far. As the stormy clouds cleared through the morning, I knew I must proceed and pressed on toward Ropkund.

Throughout the pilgrimage, I heard stories of this sacred lake, a small body of freezing water with a tragic past. Hundreds of human skeletons litter its shore, with more visible in the shallow depths. Legend tells that the remains—carbon dated at 1,200 years old—are from the retinue of Raja Jasdhaval, King of Kanauj, and his pregnant wife Rani Balam-pa, who were on pilgrimage to Nanda Devi shrine with servants, a dance troupe and others. Caught here in a powerful hail storm and then an avalanche of snow and ice, the entire



Heights of worship: (counter-clockwise from opposite page) A sadhu known simply as Babaji stands at the water's edge of Ropkund lake; some of the human remains that surround the lake; pilgrims hike up the Path of Death; a pilgrim blows a sacred conch; a puja takes place upon reaching Homkund; the final steep climb with Nanda Devi up to Homkund



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party perished. I found the lake beautiful, but it didn't feel as sacred to me as the other places we had visited. Admittedly, though, my experience was framed in the light of my recent rain-induced struggles.

Leaving the lake, we reached the Path of Death. This craggy trail twists and winds up through dark mists that overhang the cliff sides. In some places the mud was thick and slippery; many pilgrims went barefoot to avoid falling. A long and torturous climb brought us to our goal, Homkund. The sense of accomplishment was overwhelming.

Here the four-horned ram is set free. It is believed he then finds his way to the summit of Mount Trishul, known as Kailash to the lo-

cals, leading the spirit of Nanda Devi to Her mountaintop.

The Hindu religion is unique. Within it one feels so much more connected to nature than in other faiths. There is an overwhelming sense that we are part of the natural world, rather than the rulers of it. I have had a special passion for the Himalayan culture since I was a little girl. My dear uncle instilled it in me by telling stories about the region's people, how they adapted to the dangerous climate; their trials and adventures and, most importantly, their deep connection to the mountains and rivers. This yatra gave me a powerful first-hand experience of that sacred, auspicious bond.

Mr. Modi Is Our Hindu of the Year, 2014

Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, is honored for empowering Hindus globally to be bold and proud of their religious and cultural heritage

THE HINDU OF THE YEAR AWARD IS INTENDED to honor one eminent religious leader who has most impacted the faith and spread its values, compassion and profundity across the globe. In surveying the world Hindu landscape for that award upon the close of 2014, the editors of HINDUISM TODAY encountered something unexpected. The most qualified person was not a full-time religious leader as in the past, but rather a politician: Shri Narendra Modi, India's new Prime Minister. Surprised by our own conclusion, we reached out to several Hindu leaders for their opinions. Each agreed with us that at the moment, for reasons both historical in terms of India and personal in terms of Mr. Modi himself, he is indeed the right choice.

Many people pointed out that for the first time in 800 years, a Hindu is in charge of India. Even when independence was restored in 1947, the idea of secularism was enshrined in the Indian constitution, and the British Raj's deprecation of Hinduism as the sustenance of the poor and unsophisticated seemed to only strengthen in the postcolonial Indian psyche.

Now India has Narendra Modi, not only the first PM born after independence, but an openly devout, practicing Hindu, committed to using the wisdom of Sanatana Dharma to the benefit of his nation, its citizens and all peoples of the world.

His impact has been particularly notable on the youth, who came out in droves to elect him. One swami observed, "His travel abroad, his speeches and the initiation of projects such as the cleaning of Ganga, have all given the youth of India a new absence of hesitation. They used to hesitate, but now the PM himself is without inhibition. He's talking about faith, he's talking about Hinduism, he's talking about the old traditions. He's not only just talking, he's implementing, he's bringing it into practice."

Dr. Abhaya Asthana, president of Vishwa

Hindu Parishad of America, told us, "Hindus the world over are thrilled that there is a person at the helm of the government in India who is guided by dharma. By simply being himself during his recent visit to the US and following his personal practices, he sent a strong signal that one can be a great leader and be a good Hindu at the same time—there



NARENDRA MODI.IN

Biography

Born on September 17, 1950, to a family of grocers in present-day Gujarat, Narendra Modi began attending training sessions with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh at the age of eight. Drawn to sadhu life in his late teens, he spent two itinerant years before returning to his home state to work in a canteen run by his uncle.

After the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, Modi became a full-time pracharak for the RSS and rose through the organization's leadership. He received political science degrees from Delhi University and Gujarat University. Assigned to the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1985, he was elected as Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2001, the post he held until his election as the republic's Prime Minister in May, 2014.

Living a frugal, solitary life has allowed him to dedicate himself fully to serving his country and her citizens, and to his sadhana, which is said to include worship, meditation, scriptural study and hatha yoga, from which he claims he receives tremendous energy. He composes poems in Gujarati [sidebar at right], observes a strict vegetarian diet and abstains from alcohol.

Ramesh Shah, a close friend and admirer, and founder of Ekal Vidy-alaya, summed up the personal philosophy Shri Modi employs in his daily life and in his relationships: "*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam* ("global family"), *sarvetra sukhinah santu* ("may every being be happy"), Swami Vivekananda's practical

approach of Vedanta for humanity and the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*." Modi frequently evokes Vivekananda in his addresses and dauntlessly quotes the lessons of the *Gita* and other scriptures—in Sanskrit—when negotiating policy.

Shah said, "He is humble, yet firm in his duty. He knows his dharma; he knows what he has to do for the betterment of society. And when a challenge arises, he accepts the reality of it without getting frustrated, always calmly searching for a solution. Even when he



NARENDRA MODI.IN



UNATTRIBUTED

has to rally, he expresses himself in a natural way, without losing his inner patience. We don't have examples of this in the larger world, so this must come from his spirituality, his practice of meditation and yoga."

A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats

It is far too early in Shri Modi's term for him to have created a list of accomplishments—though he did immediately succeed at having the UN adopt June 21 as International Yoga Day. But this award is not given for programs planned or promised for the future, such as the cleaning of the Ganga or improvements to Varanasi, his home constituency. Rather, it is given for what has already occurred: inspiring Hindus worldwide with a new sense of confidence, pride and hope.

Anshuman Mishra, a businessman who is affiliated with the RSS and lives in London, puts it this way: "I think he has become symbolic of the Hindu renaissance. He has created an enthusiasm among Hindus outside of India for the first time. This is a golden era for Hindus, and the respect which this new leader has brought is enormous. He is being an effective Hindu rather than a noisy Hindu."

Here in America, Hindu organizations now encounter a different climate. Suhag Shukla, director of the Hindu American Foundation, an advocacy group, explained, "What has been most surprising for us has been the subtle but palpable change in attitude we've experienced in our meetings on Capitol Hill. The world finally sees an Indian leader who is not only not shy or embarrassed about his religious heritage, but admittedly draws inspiration from it. This vocalization has a tremendous impact on ordinary Hindus. It provides a much-needed articulation of faith in action."

Tulsi Gabbard, the sole Hindu member of the US House of Representatives, has seen her career and influence boosted by Mr. Modi's invitation for her to visit India and

their subsequent meeting in December, 2014. Receiving personal attention from a world leader is an honor not usually enjoyed by someone just beginning her second term in Congress.

While opponents warned that putting an avowed Hindu in India's top leadership position might result in alienation of the country's minorities, supporters say there has been no evidence of that so far. Ramesh Shah explained, "We know what he has done for Gujarat, where not a single minority has been marginalized; they actually came up financially, educationally and in all ways during his administration. In the same way, on a national level, he always speaks of what must be done for all 1.25 billion citizens of India."

That the world's second most populous country has, for the first time in modern history, a leader who openly lives a pious life and unabashedly brings precepts from the Sanatana Dharma forward in his government has inspired and empowered Hindus everywhere. It is this leader whom we honor with the Hindu Renaissance Award, naming him Hindu of the Year, 2014.

Previous awardees are Swami Paramananda Bharati ('90), Swami Chidananda Saraswati ('91), Swami Chinmayananda ('92), Mata Amritanandamayi Ma ('93), Swami Satchidananda ('94), Pramukh Swami Maharaj ('95), Satya Sai Baba ('96), Sri Chinmoy ('97), Swami Bua ('98), Swami Chidananda Saraswati of Divine Life Society ('99), Ma Yoga Shakti ('00), Dr. T. S. Sambamurthy Sivachariar ('01), Dada J.P. Vaswani ('02), Sri Tiruchi Mahaswamigal ('03), Dr. K. Pichai Sivacharya ('04), Swami Tejomayananda ('05), Ramesh Bhai Oza ('06), Sri Balagangadharanathaswami ('07), Swami Avdheshanand ('08), Swami Gopal Sharan Devacharya ('09), Sri P. Parameswaran ('10), Sri Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamiji ('11), the Shilpa Parampara ('12) and Sree Sree Dr. Shivakumara Swami ('13).

In different modes: (far left) Shri Narendra Modi speaking to the American public at Madison Square Garden in New York on September 28, 2014; (above left) honored by children on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan in New Delhi on August 10, 2014; (above) as a young sadhu

Pure-Hearted

HT staff translation of a poem penned in Gujarati by Shri Narendra Modi

Who here can discern destiny?
A man am I who welcomes a challenge

I borrow no light
Being myself a burning lantern

Brightness does not dazzle me
Whose own light is ample

To sunder the sea of darkness
The lotus' light ignites me

Fog fails to attract me
For I am open and pure of heart

Who here can discern destiny?
A man am I who welcomes a challenge

I heed no horoscopes
nor do I yield to the planets

The games of cowards
Find no place to play in my soul

I alone am my lineage
I alone am my heir

Who here can discern destiny?
A man am I who welcomes a challenge

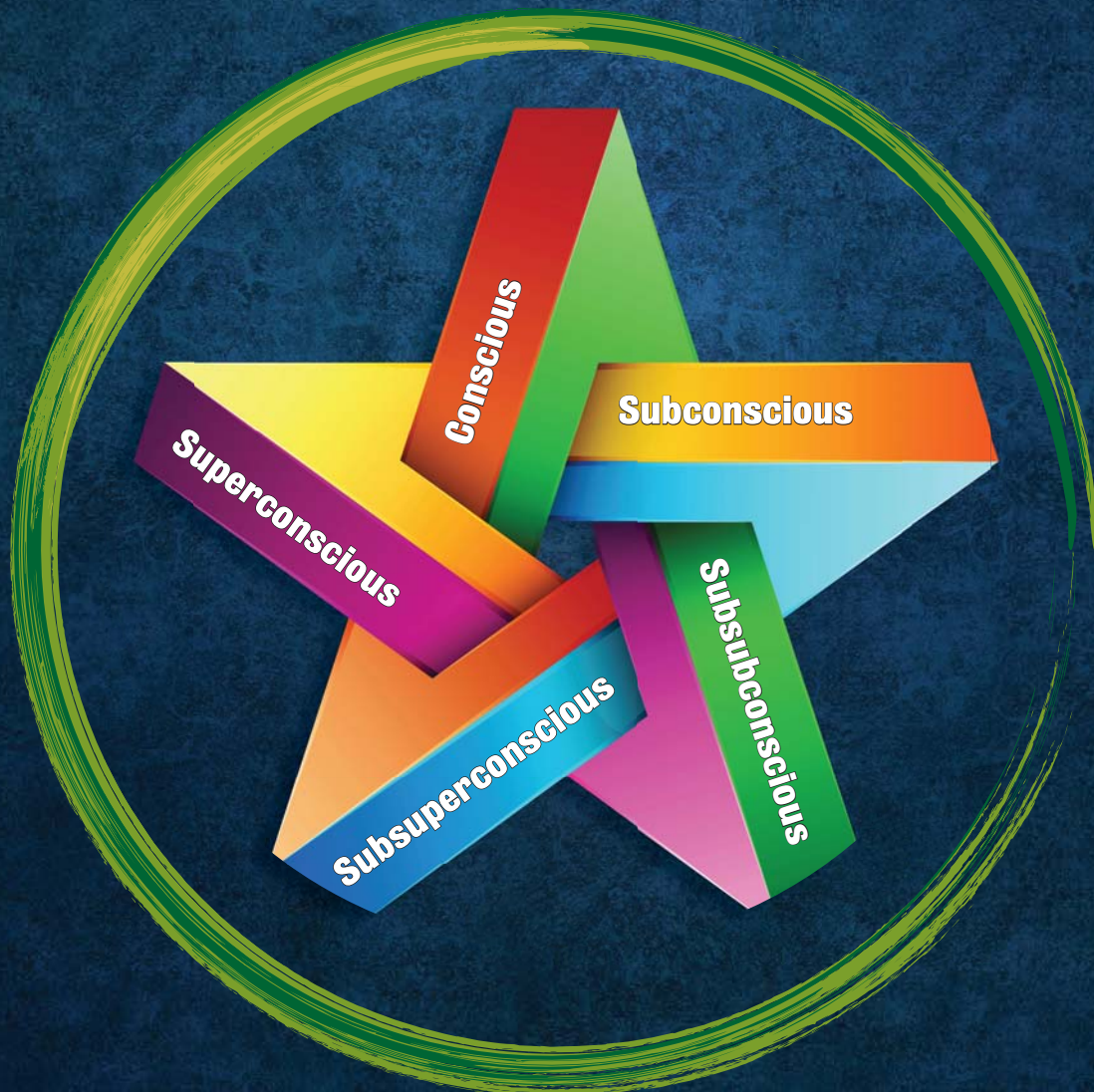


The Five States of Mind



Exploring the conscious, subconscious, subsubconscious, superconscious and subsuperconscious—the interrelated states of our existence

FROM SATGURU SIVAYA SUBRAMUNIASWAMI'S *MERGING WITH SIVA*



SHUTTERSTOCK

POPULAR THOUGHT PREVALENT TODAY IS THAT WE have an external mind to be shunned and an inner being to be reached. I look at the internal areas of the mind and the external areas of the mind as being one and the same, an integrated whole, one totality of mind. The inner universe of the mind is tremendous. It is much larger, more complex and better organized than any of the universes we can see with our physical eyes. The superconscious areas of mind deep within each of us are more advanced than the externalities of the material conscious world.

Man is discovering new things within the sea and in outer space. All of these vast new discoveries are being registered within his subconscious mind. Only through his deep, intuitive, perceptive faculties, resident within the inner area of his mind, is he able to grasp these new findings, relate them to discoveries of the past and conditions of the present and hold a mountaintop overview of it all. But if he does not have this deep, intuitive, perceptive faculty awakened, man becomes confused by these new discoveries and fearful of his future.

Only the one who is inwardly awake, vibrant, alive and has the burning desire to know and be creative with that knowledge is content and at peace with himself and the world at large. For the more he knows about the external world, the more he discovers from deep within himself as he passes this knowledge on to the present generation, who will in turn pass it on to the succeeding generation, systematically and in an organized way. Many enlightened souls on the Earth today are handling the knowledge acquired from the exterior areas of the mind and the knowledge acquired from the depths of their own being in this way. To perform this mental activity, one does not have to be mystically inclined. A mystic is one who lives two-thirds within himself and one-third within the external areas of the mind.

A person who lives two-thirds within the external mind and only one-third within himself is not classified as a mystic. Let us look at the one-third of the inner area of mind in which he is living. It can be a delightful inner world or a very tragic area of the mind. This depends upon the character of the individual himself, the nature of his evolution and how he conducts himself in daily life. Although he is living only one-third within, intuitive flashes can penetrate the exterior walls of his consciousness strongly enough to change the history and course of humanity.

The Mind's Three Phases

The totality of the mind is vast and complicated. However, it is helpful to look at the entirety of the mind in three basic phases: the instinctive, the intellectual and the intuitive. The instinctive mind is easy to become aware of and experience. It includes the impulses of our physical body, our cravings, our desires, our digestive system, and our emotional mechanism that works through the physical body. The systems of elimination and blood circulation and the regulation of the heartbeat are all within the instinctive mind. This phase of mind functions automatically, or instinctively. It is as much alive in the animal kingdom as among humans.

Man alone develops the intellectual mind and is responsible for its composition as he lives along through life. This phase is a mixture of man's instinctive desires and cravings coupled with the knowledge he has gained from others and from his own intuitive discoveries. Within man's intellect, he organizes a vast amount of knowledge that begins to accumulate from a very early age. Ninety percent of this knowledge deals with the externality of the world and mind itself. The intellect can consume most of man's time through an incarnation, and usually does, lifetime after lifetime.

The intuitive, or superconscious, phase is even more complex, more organized, more refined than the instinctive or intellectual phases. It is mystically known as the mind of light, for when one is in this state of mind, he may see light within his head, and sometimes throughout the entirety of his physical body, if his inner sight is developed enough. Otherwise, he just begins to feel good all over, as actinic energy permeates his nervous system.

The instinctive mind also has within it various forces: the force of fear, the force of anger, the force of jealousy and the dynamic force of self-preservation. It is what it is—instinctive. It is impulsive and immediately reacts to all situations. Though it is a great force in developing the intellect, its greatest enemy is intuition, the mind of the soul, which guides humans out of the morass of the lower nature into sublimity.

Most of us find the intellect a saving grace when it comes from the transformation of the instinctive nature into something more substantial. Constantly we strive to broaden our intellect, increase our knowledge, govern the mind with organized thinking and control our emotions by repressing the instinctive nature.



This is nature's way of increasing man's justification of that which has passed before the window of the mind and was not pleasing to his intellect, the justification being that enough knowledge has not been acquired by the intellect to sufficiently suppress the instinctive nature.

While the instinctive mind places great pulls on the individual, the intellectual mind often has a stranglehold. An intellectual person could run this explanation through his intellect and be able to explain it back better than we are unraveling it here, relating this point to that point exquisitely, yet deriving absolutely nothing from the conclusions to improve his own life. The next day his mental interest would be off on another subject.

When intuitive flashes come, he knows the next thing to be done in a creative activity. This is the superconscious area of the mind. When man is extremely perceptive, tremendously creative, and knowledge seems to come to him from the inside of himself spontaneously, he is a superconscious being.

Intellect and the Instinctive Mind

Instinctive is a word that some may understand and others take offense at. Don't. It only means "natural or innate," naming the drives and impulses that order the animal world and the physical and lower astral aspects of humans. For example, self-preservation, procreation, hunger and thirst, as well as the emotions of greed, hatred, anger, fear, lust and jealousy, are all instinctive forces. They are very real in animals and humans alike. When the mind functions instinctively, it is controlled by the habit impressions made in the subconscious during its journey through the experiences of life. Instinctive also means that the driving force comes from the sexual nature. The nature is turned in that direction subconsciously, even though the conscious mind may not be cognizant of the fact. It also means that in the event of an emergency, the animal nature would take over completely, being jarred loose from lack of what I term "mind-control," or from what might be called self-control.

The first steps on the spiritual path consist in learning to harness

these tendencies and impulses and transmute their energies into the higher nature. But we should not think of the instinctive mind as "bad," for it controls the basic faculties of perception and movement, digestion, elimination, ordinary thought and emotion and the many other vital functions of the physical being. Animals, birds, fish, reptiles and insects are the personification of the instinctive mind. Living mainly in the areas of fear, they react immediately to change. Their driving forces are sustenance, sex, shelter and security for their young and themselves. It is these instinctive drives that are the most difficult impulses for humans to deal with. They are, for people, the seeds of all the desires of all the entanglements within the four areas—sex, money, food and clothes—which we capture in one word, desire. Yes, it is desire that propels humanity onward.

Intellect and Intuition

Mystics never demean or belittle intellectual reasoning. The intellect is not bad. It is good and necessary when used correctly. But they

also do not elevate it too highly, knowing it is not the whole mind, it is only one phase of the mind. Instinctive, intellectual and intuitive phases define the whole of the mind. We often use the terms "unfolding intuitive faculties" and "developing intuition" in an effort to encourage an individual on the path to work within himself in subduing his intellect so that he can actually observe the already functioning totality of his intuitive mind.

In order to subdue the intellect—that partial conglomerate of thought patterns and modes of procedure which accord with the culture of the day—it is first necessary to inwardly observe how one's acquired intellect actually functions. Observation is a faculty of the intuitive mind, and this particular aspect of observation only comes into usage after daily meditation has been maintained over a long period of time. Once an inkling of success in knowing intuition and how it differs from reasoning, emotional impulses and pre-programmed patterns within the subconscious awakens, the contest is won. Then and then only we can sustain this knowledge and dive

Brain & Mind

Glimpsing the New Science of Consciousness

The old science that we all learned in school teaches that consciousness is created by the activities of the brain. Perceptions, feelings, instincts, reasoning and memory all derive from neurological activity in the cranium. The conclusion, quite naturally, is that when you die, or when the brain dies, consciousness ceases. But there is a new science of consciousness, drawing from quantum physics, near-death and out of body reports, which concludes that it is not the brain that creates consciousness, but consciousness that creates the brain, and every other material thing. This view gives credence to the survival of the soul after death, and has deep roots in Indian metaphysics. We share here reflections from the new science trailblazers.

FOR AT LEAST TWO THOUSAND years thinkers have tried to explain the human mind and disagreed heatedly, but a consensus has formed around one thing. When you try to figure out where the mind comes from, you find yourself in a strange domain filled with mirrors, illusions and a shaky grasp on reality. The mind is harder to hunt down than the mythical unicorn, because the hunter and the hunted are the same. This frustrating obstacle has led to speculation that swings between two extremes—at one extreme, consciousness is pure illusion created by brain chemistry. At the other extreme, consciousness is a given that defies exploration, much as water is a given to a fish. We can't jump out of our minds to land on a place where objective observations could be made, just as a fish cannot land on dry land as a way to peer under the sea. Both are physically impossible.

Must the riddle of the mind remain a riddle? Our position is radically different from the vast majority of brain researchers, who attempt to unravel the intricacies of the mind by dissecting the intricacies of the human nervous system. We hold that mind doesn't

need the brain in order to exist. It precedes all living things by being fundamental to the universe. In other words, human beings inhabit a conscious universe.

Over the past decade or so, this notion has gained in stature, even though it began as a ridiculed fantasy. Some leading cosmologists are circling back to the insights of quantum pioneers like Max Planck and Erwin Schrödinger. Planck declared that it was impossible to "get behind" consciousness, meaning that it can't be explained

by referring to anything more primal. Schrödinger held that consciousness cannot be subdivided; there is only one consciousness, even though it appears to be subdivided into billions of individual minds. To use an honored analogy from the Vedanta tradition in India, pure gold can be made into countless objects, but in essence they are the same gold.

Planck, Schrödinger and their like-minded colleagues never pursued this line of investigation very far, being consumed with the new frontiers of quantum mechanics and the challenge to create a complete account of microscopic phenomena. Today, the physicists who are circling back can take advantage of brain science, which gives them a continuous view of mind from the biggest to the smallest, from the entire cosmos to the subatomic particles that constitute all objects, including the human brain.

One of the most open-minded cosmologists, Max Tegmark of MIT, is a gifted explainer of difficult mind-brain-cosmos issues. Tegmark goes further than traditional physicalists, the preferred term for those who trace all phenomena back to matter and energy. He has become identified with a tag line: Consciousness is a state of matter. However, this view still remains materialistic, in that subatomic particles come first and foremost, arriving from the quantum vacuum

carrying information, which then becomes one of the primary trademarks of consciousness. By transferring and building up more complex information structures, one arrives at the human brain and its potential for creating artificial intelligence in computers of the future—everything depends on how powerful their information processing becomes.

Quantum physics is a two-edged sword when it comes to explaining the mind. Its predictions and theoretical approach have been used to justify a conscious universe or not, depending on the perspective of the thinker who is wielding the theory. But there is a consensus on the necessity of mathematical models. This is where Tegmark has fascinated his peers, because he wants to rescue the materialist view—he totally believes in mathematics as the ultimate model of reality—by positing that matter can have the property of consciousness. His ambitions are, quite literally, cosmic. He wants to deliver a universe where math is compatible with mind.

The higher you climb, the farther you may fall. In Tegmark's case, critiques have emerged in equal measure with praise. He himself poses the most troubling problems that must be confronted:

1. Since it is agreed among quantum theorists that subatomic particles are essentially mathematical constructs, with no fixed properties that resemble tangible objects, how did rocks, clouds, mountains and trees get their physical properties? It looks like creation out of nothing. How do we get from numbers to the hardness of granite and the sweetness of strawberries?

2. To date, there has been a chain of discoveries of ever more potent mathematics to explain the structure of the cosmos. But what if the chain isn't endless? We may be at the point where Nature's patterns, and the math that describes them, run out. If that's true, then the mathematical models will no longer work, just as every previous model going back to the Greeks has succumbed. The big difference is that no one trained to view math as the ultimate tool of science can conceive of what would replace it.

3. What gives some kinds of matter the property of consciousness and not others? Oxygen has the property of being gaseous, while iron is metallic. The difference can be explained using the periodic chart of the elements. No such chart exists for why the sugar in your brain participates in thinking, while the sugar in a sugar cube does not, until you consume it. No explanation exists for why the same electrons that are being sent around the brain are somehow associated with thought, while the same types of electrons are found in the cores of nuclear reactors. If the electrons and elementary particles are common to both, would we conclude that brains and reactors are the

same? Of course not.

4. "Information" is a dubious foundation for consciousness. You can make heavier elements by adding more protons to an atom and more atoms to a molecule, but is it true that the great achievements of the mind (represented, for example, by Mozart, Shakespeare and Einstein) were gained simply by adding more information? A Mozart symphony contains no more and no less information than a symphony by one of his hack contemporaries. Besides, doesn't information require someone to make sense of it? Random computer streams of 0's and 1's have no meaning independent of the algorithms that someone has devised in advance, using a mind. So tracing mind back to 0's and 1's seems like circular reasoning.

5. There is a limit to all models, because reality is too complex to be whittled down. The great mathematician John von Neumann supposedly said that the only adequate model of a neuron would be a neuron. In other words, you can't explain the mind by reducing it to anything else.

Tegmark offers an eloquent exposition of his claim that matter may have consciousness as one of its basic properties—at least he and others in the same wave of cosmologists are nibbling around the fringes of a universe that may be entirely mindful. One camp is willing to call itself "panpsychist," meaning that in some way everything is conscious. This would be the same as accepting Schrödinger's original notion that consciousness is holistic and cannot be subdivided. A radically new view of reality emerges if you accept this one idea, sending shock waves through brain science, quantum physics and cosmology.

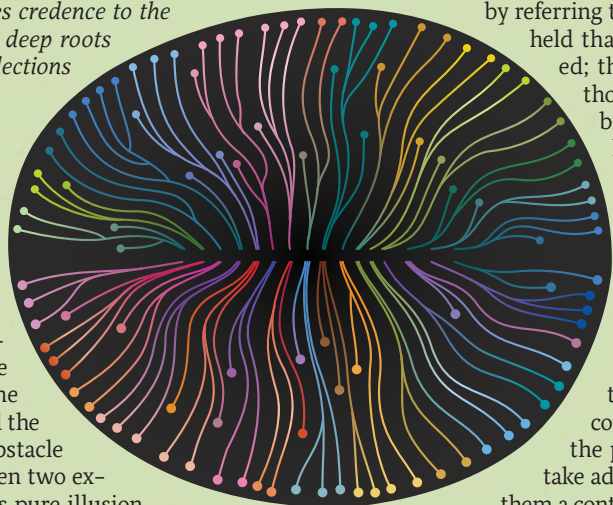
Here are three quotations from Vashishtha, a Vedic sage writing many centuries ago, almost eerily anticipating the most far-seeing speculations in current cosmology.

The entire universe is forever the same as the consciousness that dwells in every atom, even as jewelry is non-different from gold.

Cosmic consciousness alone exists now and ever; in it are no worlds, no created beings. That consciousness reflected in itself appears to be creation.

The world exists because consciousness is, and the world is the body of consciousness.

By Deepak Chopra, MD; Rudolph E. Tanzi, PhD; Menas Kafatos, PhD; Subhash Kak, PhD; and Neil Theise, MD



deeper into the inevitable, all the time losing the future and the past, and loosening the reins of the intellect.

Some men say they are part of God, that the God Spirit is within them. The intuitive mind we consider to be that part of God's vast mind—our inspiration. If you have ever had a hunch and had it work out, that is the intuitive mind working within you. It has temporarily dominated your conscious mind and made it possible for you to look into the future and estimate its happenings. The intuitive mind is the essence of time, yet it understands time and timelessness, its essence. It is the essence of space, yet it comprehends space and spacelessness. It is real, yet it does not exist—real only when used, nonexistent to the lower realms of the mind.

Man's individual awareness is either captured by the nerve system of external consciousness of the animal bodies, which his soul inhabits as vehicles to live in on Earth, or captured by his celestial nerve system. This, then, is the intuitive nature, the natural expression of the transcendental soul known as man.

The Five States of Mind

Observing the great vastness of the mind, we can draw another conclusion and say that there are five states of mind: conscious, subconscious, subsubconscious, superconscious and superconscious. The first state is the conscious mind, in which we perform our daily routines. When awareness is in the conscious mind, we are externalized. This means we take our direction mainly from memory of past experiences, from other people, from newspapers, magazines, radio, television or our emotions. The average man is aware in the conscious mind from the time he awakens in the morning until he falls asleep at night. That's what makes him average. Only when he becomes mystically inclined does he become consciously aware of some of the other four states.

The second state is the subconscious mind, the grand storehouse and computer of man. It faithfully registers all thoughts and feelings that pass through the conscious state, whether correct or incorrect, whether positive or negative. It registers them and acts or reacts accordingly.

The subsubconscious, the third state of mind, is a conglomeration of various actions and reactions that we have experienced in daily life. It is a subtle state composed of two or more vibrations of experience which mingle and form a third vibration. We have an experience. We react to it. Later we have a similar experience. We react to that. These two reactions merge in the subsubconscious, causing a hybrid reaction that lives with us many, many years.

The fourth state is the superconscious mind. Deep, refined and powerful, it filters intuitive flashes from the superconscious mind through the subconscious gridwork. There are times when you want very much to find a clear answer from within yourself. However, being aware in the conscious mind predominantly, awareness is cut off from direct contact with the superconscious. So, you begin to ask questions of yourself. These questions are registered in the subconscious. The subconscious, like a well-programmed computer, begins to search for the right answer from the superconscious mind. Then, all of a sudden, you know the answer from the inside out. Finding

solutions through insight or intuition is one of the functions of the subsuperconscious. It also is the source of all true creativity, inspiration, understanding and perfect timing in daily events.

The superconscious is the fifth state of the mind. Within it is one world within another world and yet another. All mystical phenomena and deep religious experiences come from the superconscious. It is the mind of light, beautiful and vast. When one is superconsciously alive, he feels joyously alive throughout the totality of his being—physically, emotionally and mentally—for new energies are working through his nerve system. This state of the mind is available to everyone to be aware in. The superconscious is the mind of bliss. It is vast, pure intelligence. The subsuperconscious mind is that aspect of the superconscious functioning through established subconscious patterns.

Unfolding the Superconscious

The average man may have occasional subsuperconscious experiences and rare superconscious intuitive flashes. His awareness, however, is not attuned to know the intricacies of the working of his own mind. Therefore, he is not able to identify one from the other, making his sense of enjoyment less than that of the mature mystic.

The Mind & Beyond

Once an inkling of success comes in knowing intuition and how it differs from reasoning, emotional impulses and pre-programmed patterns within the subconscious, the contest is won. Then and then only we must persist to sustain this knowledge and dive deeper into the inevitable, all the time losing the future and the past, and loosening the reins of the intellect.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Because he is unaware of the higher states of mind, the average man may harbor his awareness deep in a subconscious state of suffering over the past for long periods of time, thereby completely ignoring his superconscious intuitive flashes when they come. As a result, his ability to bring awareness inward, out of the external, conscious and subconscious states of mind and into more blissful and refined areas, is lessened. Now sadhana is necessary for him to unfold his inner depth. Although he is unaware of these superconscious happenings within himself and unable to astutely pinpoint and dramatically distinguish them from his turbulent subconscious, his superconscious breakthroughs do have an effect upon the totality of his being. But when man lives externalized in the conscious and subconscious states, all the inner enjoyment and conscious abilities of exercising perceptive faculties are completely lost. The ritual of daily sadhana must be performed to quell the ordinary mind's tumultuous turbulence.

There is but one mind and, in its functioning, it works the same in everyone, as an autonomous, interrelated, self-perpetuating mechanism. Concentrate upon that mind. Find out what the mind is. Observe your thoughts, feelings and actions from within, and know that your mind is yours to use to the extent that you control the mind

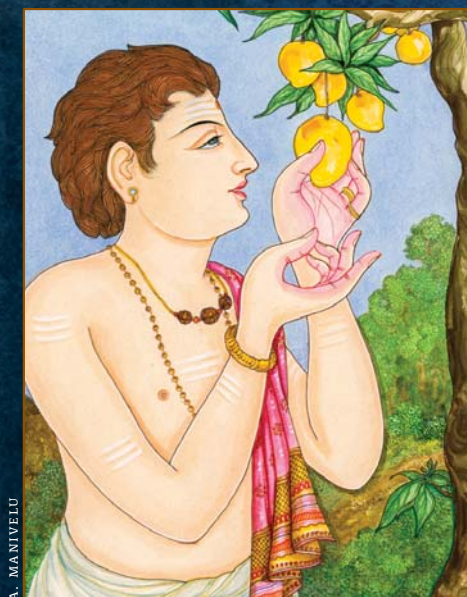
with the will.

Why must you study the mind? Because understanding alone is fifty percent of the control of the mind. This understanding is necessary to impress the subconscious deeply enough to secure awareness so that spiritual strength continues to come from within, from the superconscious through the subconscious. Before we can meditate, we have to know our way around within the mind. What part of you understands how the mind works? It is your superconscious. The subconscious can't understand how the mind works, because it's the repository. The subsubconscious can't understand. It's a collective repository. Your conscious mind can't understand either, for it is opinionated knowledge—looking at the world through the eyes of others. Only the superconscious and subsuperconscious can conceive how the mind works.

Remember, these are not five separate departments. They all interrelate. The conscious and subconscious work together. The subsubconscious seems to work independently of both the conscious and the subconscious, but it is not really independent. It is just another aspect of the subconscious. The superconscious is our vast, pure intelligence. The subsuperconscious is one aspect of the superconscious, functioning through subconscious patterns.

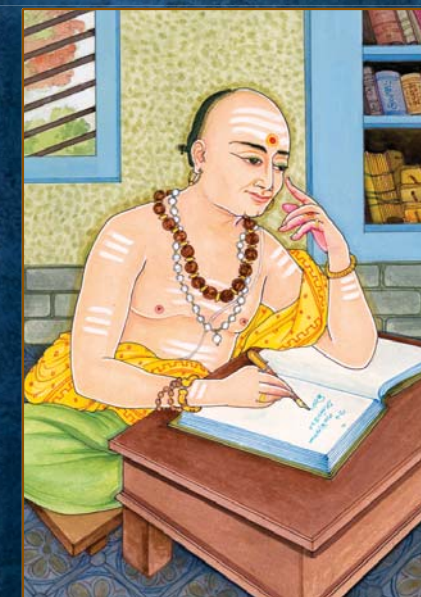
When you begin to sense this changeless existence within, your intuition begins to awaken, and if you function through the use of your intuition you are able to clear many misunderstandings about the experiences of life. In this clarity, intuition is born. Right now you perhaps think you are the mind; you may feel remote from your Inner Being, but ask yourself each time you think you have found yourself, will this change? You will find that every image you hold of yourself is subject to change—even your soul, or your superconscious mind, is subject to

change through evolution and, therefore, is impermanent. Only the Self, the very core, is eternally the same, eternally Real. Find your Inner Being through feeling; realize it is closer to you than your hands or feet, closer to you even than your breath. Your mind will want to leave this consciousness as soon as you attain it, but gently guide your mind back through the channel of concentration until once again you become rejuvenated, uplifted in the awareness of That which has never changed. That is your very Self, and That is God.

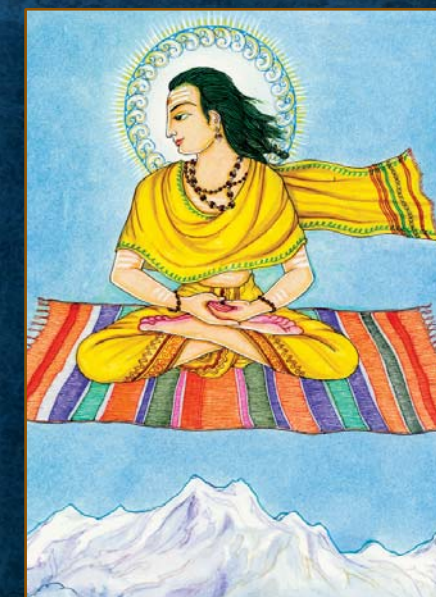


A. MANIVELU

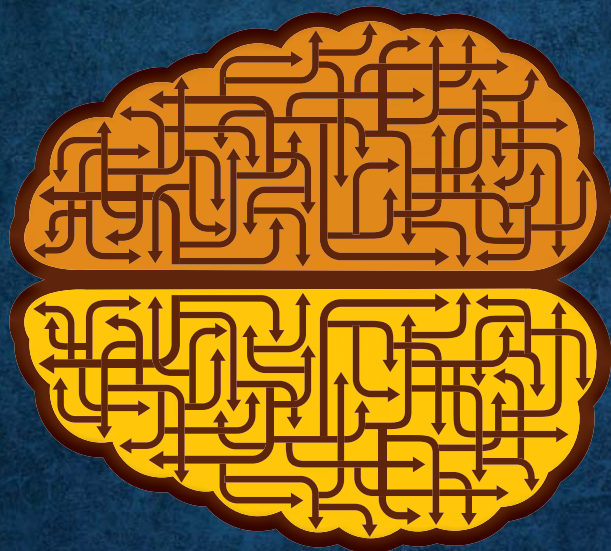
Instinctive Mind



Intellectual Mind



Intuitive Mind



The Conscious Mind

There is but one mind. The consciousness, or ego, functions within the mind's various phases. The one-tenth of the mind of the conscious plane, in ramification, is carried on by its own novelty. The object is to control the conscious mind and become consciously conscious.

MIND IS VAST, AND FROM A MYSTICAL POINT OF VIEW IT includes everything, even encompassing the elements of the physical plane. Mind and matter are not two different things. Matter is simply one phase of the mind, and it is in the conscious mind that material existence has its existence. Expand your concept of the mind to include the entire universe, from atom to galaxy. Then realize you are that mind, and that its outer manifestation is but one-tenth of the totality of the mind.

When we live in the conscious mind, we are aware of other people's ideas. We listen with our ears, we see with our eyes, we feel with our fingers. We are involved in our physical senses, functioning instinctively as far as the physical body goes. We are functioning intellectually as far as our education goes, and we are dealing and working vibrantly and vitally in the world of external form. We can live in the conscious mind and be aware of that area of consciousness life after life after life after life, because the conscious mind is ever changing, perpetuated by its own novelty. One thing or idea leads us to another, and then on to another and another and another. We listen to people talk, and we want to know what they will say next.

The conscious mind is very curious. We taste something and we want to taste something else. We see something and we want to see something else. We feel something and we want to feel something else, and we go on and on, completely dominated by our five senses. This domination by the senses makes up the totality of the conscious mind. These five senses are constantly active, as energy continually flows out into the external world through them. The conscious mind makes up what is called the external world, and the external world is the conscious mind. We are all participating in making our own conscious mind as we go along through life.

Though the conscious mind is only seeming, it is very real while we are in it, as it glorifies in adding to itself. This process is called the intellect. As concepts and partial concepts are added one after another, the average person develops his or her intellect, and if it is not balanced by inner knowing, it holds the person firmly in the external realms of consciousness. Many people are trained to think, having had their conscious mind programmed in such a way, that the superconscious mind is nothing but a farce, that it doesn't exist at all, that the only reality is the external world, and pleasing the external senses is what life is all about. They are coached to believe that anything of an inner life or an inner nature is just pure fantasy, imagination, which only weak-minded people believe in. Many people live this way, with their awareness bogged down in the conscious mind—believing reality to be outside their physical body. The object

of spiritual unfoldment is to transcend the conscious mind into superconsciousness and beyond.

The Donkey and the Carrot

When we are in the conscious mind, we are like a donkey with a carrot in front of our nose. We are always walking to try to get that carrot. We are never satisfied, and we are never happy. The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. No matter how much money we have, we want more. No matter how many clothes we have, we need more. No matter how many television programs we watch, there is always a better one coming up. No matter how many sights we have seen, the next one may surpass them all. No matter how much food we eat, there is always the next big wonderful meal to enjoy. No matter how many emotions we experience, the next set of those emotional experiences will be the high point of our entire life, and we are sure of it. That is the conscious mind.

When we live in the conscious mind, we only surmise. We make guesses. We are never quite sure if we are right. Therefore, we are insecure, because the conscious mind only knows what has gone before it. It is certain only about the past. If it has been provided with a good memory, then it knows the past very well. But without a good memory, the conscious mind doesn't know the past well at all. So, when we are in the conscious mind, we have one predominant and solid quality that we really can be sure of, and that is fear. We are afraid! We're afraid of the future. And many of the things in the past petrify us, for we don't want them to happen to us again.

The conscious mind is the real enemy, the real barrier, the real distractor to someone on the path of enlightenment. It is intriguing. It is the temptress. It leads us on and on and on, life after life after life after life after life after life after life. It is a wonderful state of mind, however, as long as our superconscious faculties are also available for awareness to flow into once in a while to become refreshed and renewed by a change of perspective and influx of energy. Otherwise, the conscious mind is a difficult and onerous state of mind in which to live, day after day after day. The spiritual path leads us out of the morass of the darkness of the conscious mind into the mind of light, which we call superconsciousness.

Reason Reigns Supreme

It really hardens a person to live in the conscious mind all the time, because he has to build an ego shell around himself for protection, and that makes him insensitive and rough. One of the biggest protective influences of the conscious mind is anger. Anger makes a

person cunning in his thinking, and of course the predominant underlying quality of anger is fear. He is always afraid of something. It is generally something that may happen or is going to happen. He is always in conflict with someone. These are the motivating forces of the conscious mind: anger and fear. Most people live in the conscious mind unconsciously.

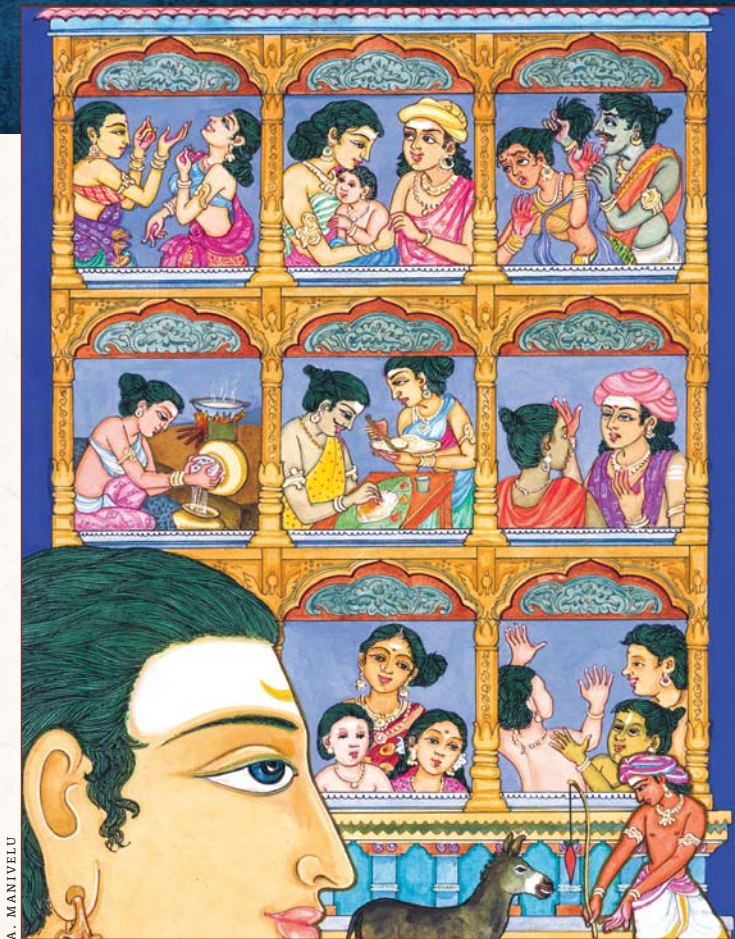
The conscious mind is the area of the mind where memory and time are Gods, and reason is the Supreme Ruler. "If it is not reasonable, it is not acceptable," declares the conscious mind, and "If we can't measure it, it does not exist." That is the conscious mind. It is active. It is alive. The conscious mind perpetuates itself, and we all help it to do that. It is carried on in ramification by its own novelty. We can always find in the conscious mind some distraction to please us, to intrigue us, to dominate our awareness of other states of consciousness. And we don't have to look very hard to find it.

The mystic's goal is to control awareness while he is in the conscious mind—to know where he is in consciousness. When he finds he is aware in the conscious mind, and the five senses have become his ruler, he then controls his awareness within the conscious mind itself. He does this in a number of ways. One way is through the control of breath. Breath is life, and life is breath. Breath is the controlling factor of awareness. Awareness rides on breath. Breath is also a controlling factor of our willpower. A seeker must develop a dynamic will to walk the path of enlightenment, so that he does not stumble or falter, but continues onward no matter how difficult the path seems to be for him.

Like Writing on Water

Spiritual unfoldment leads us along the path into the illumined knowing of where we are in consciousness at any point in time. There are many methods through which this may be accomplished. Carefully choose one path and then stay with it with extreme loyalty. For this a preceptor is needed, a spiritual guide to answer questions, to raise questions for you to find answers to within your meditations. It is an arduous journey. The rewards come only near its end.

To live positively in the conscious mind each day, exercise at least a half hour. Keep the vital energies of the body high and healthy. Eat simply and follow a vegetarian diet, feeding the stomach rather than the mouth. Be considerate of others always and live inconspicuously, almost transparently, by not ruffling your surroundings, by keeping the home neat and clean, by passing through a room or place and leaving it in a nicer condition than before you arrived. Seek fresh air and learn to breathe deeply. Get out in the sun. Move the physical



The conscious mind is likened to a donkey and a carrot, for it pursues what's in front of it, drawn by desire. Here a woman's external mind is depicted as a house with many rooms, each filled with a different experience: family, meals, conversations, chores and relationships.

body, walk briskly, dance, keep the energies vibrant and buoyant. Be close to nature. Grow food. Develop an art or craft so the hands are active, creative. Of course, being neat and attractive in personal appearance keeps the thoughts of others toward you positive. This is the way to live in the conscious mind. Try to live life as though you are walking in the rain without getting wet, or carefully writing on water. No ripples, no disturbance, no reactionary residue that has to be faced at some future date.



The Subconscious Mind

The part of mind “beneath” the conscious mind, the storehouse or recorder of all experience (whether remembered consciously or not)—the holder of past impressions, reactions and desires. Also, the seat of involuntary physiological processes.

WHAT IS YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS MIND? THINK ABOUT THIS for a minute. Realize that everything that has once passed through your conscious mind in the form of experience is resident right now within your subconscious. Not only that, but imbedded within the cellular structure of your body, in the DNA code—one of the most formidable discoveries of modern science—lie all the experiences of your genetic history. The life, the biological evolution of your forefathers, is all registered in the molecular strands of your subconscious, capable of being recalled into memory.

The subconscious mind, like the conscious mind, has a form of its own. It is given form, shape and momentum by the nature of your experiences in life and the way you react to them. Most people are not happy with the form of their subconscious mind. They are still reacting to early experiences, early environments. Some people go to great expense in trying to change the form of their subconscious through therapy or travel, but because there is no absolution in either, in time they generally manage to recreate their subconscious in the same old form. Childhood experiences do have a profound influence on one's make-up in this life, but these influences are by no means binding. Any attitude, any personality conflict or block in the subconscious can be demagnetized and resolved.

How do we change the form of the subconscious? We purify it by resolving in understanding those experiences which have created it. How do we resolve those experiences through understanding? We bring them up into the light and face them without reaction. By resolving our reactive experiences in understanding, the subconscious becomes more and more transparent to our own view and, therefore, necessarily undergoes positive change. To be able to objectively observe one's own experiences without reaction is one of the powers acquired through the performance of sadhana.

Resolving Past Experiences

Suppose when you were young you stole some money from your mother's purse. “She promised me this once and broke her promise,” you rationalize. “Besides, I really need it,” you add. Then, because you are not particularly pleased with yourself, you pack this experience away in a corner of the subconscious where you will not need to think about it. You suppress it. But the next day, your mother casually mentions the subject of money to you, and you react or emotionally re-enact the experience. You feel guilty. Not wanting to think about it, you suppress it again, deeper in the subconscious. Suppose then later in life your mother has become seriously ill, and in a reflective mood you realize that you have not been close to her for many years. Mixed

in with a rush of buried memories you come across the incident of the stolen money.

For the first time you appreciate and realize the sense of guilt that had lingered, influencing your life since that time in a hundred subtle ways. In the light of understanding, the experience suddenly becomes clear to you, and you objectively and unemotionally see yourself as you were at that time. You feel relieved and strangely lifted, not because you were able to analyze why you stole the money, but because in totally facing and accepting yourself in that circumstance you realize that you have expanded beyond it into a new realm.

Intuition travels through a purified subconscious. Before we can utilize the superconscious or intuitive realms of the mind, we must be able to resolve those past experiences which may still vibrate in our subconscious. Realize, however, that you need not seek out mental repressions. Simply face each one honestly as it naturally arises in life. Imagine that you are trying to arrive at an important business or family decision. All the facts you need to know have already been outlined, yet you find yourself frustrated in not being able to arrive at a clear decision. The more you concentrate upon the problem, the more obscure does the answer seem. What your conscious mind isn't aware of is that the personality problems you are having with your superior at the office, or with your spouse at home, are clouding the issue. Soon after, while relaxing on a family outing, thinking about nothing in particular, a great feeling of compassion, forgiveness and understanding wells up within you, and all at once that “bright idea” needed to solve the problem comes to you unbidden.

A Channel to Intuition

Why does intuition come at this time? Your mind being at rest and no longer disturbed, intuition can flow through it unhampered. Then, too, the elements of a problem have a way of piecing themselves together in the subconscious when it is allowed to relax. Your best answers often come after you have removed the searchlight of your conscious mind's focus for a time. This is the superconscious working through the subconscious, making it subsuperconscious.

You have now unfolded the key to living an intuitive and productive life. People who live positive lives have clear goals well impressed in the subconscious mind. They often draw upon their subsuperconscious mind, though they may call it by another name—perception, insight, intuition, instinct or sixth sense.

The subconscious mind performs many, many functions for us. In fact, it would be impossible to do without it. But think of some of the uses of the subconscious—the skills which your memory bank

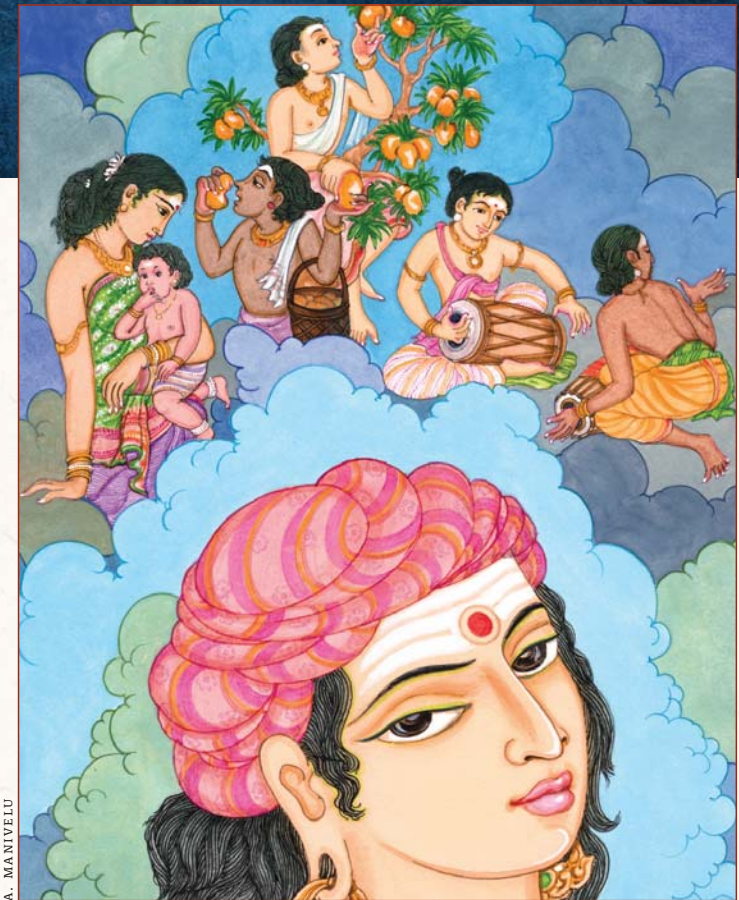
acquires, such as typing, driving, playing musical instruments or speaking a language. As soon as any learning process becomes subconscious, the conscious mind is free to direct its attention to new areas of learning. Even all the processes of the physical body are governed by the subconscious mind. Can you imagine having to think through and control your heartbeat, or your digestion every time you enjoyed a meal, or the intricacies of muscular coordination? It is only when we interfere with the natural processes of the subconscious—which are very intelligent if left alone—that we become aware of our dependence upon this positive state of mind.

The subconscious mind is a storehouse, a reflection of all previous conscious mind experiences. The power of our decisions creates our reactions of tomorrow. When tomorrow's reactions happen, they program the subconscious. We have to be careful that our programming is just right, so that the channels to superconsciousness begin to open through the subconscious.

Facing Old Memories

When man finally turns inward, sits down and asks “Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?” what is the first thing he discovers? The subconscious mind, of course. Do not be afraid of the subconscious. It is useless to be afraid of the past. If memories come up from the subconscious as if they happened yesterday, and you begin reacting emotionally and even physically all over again, say to yourself, “Welcome, welcome, welcome, memory from the past. My goodness, you're shaking my emotional body. I remember going through these emotional states years ago, and here we are reliving this film over again. But now I am on the spiritual path to enlightenment. I am the Self. One day I'm going to realize it fully. I only live in this physical body. I use these emotions, but I won't be used by them. They are my tools. So here you are, my memory pattern, trying to make me feel like I did five years ago before I reprogrammed my subconscious and awakened spiritually. O, memory from the past, you have tested me well. Thank you.” Then, like a good secretary, write down on a piece of paper everything you can remember about these experiences that have come before your vision, and burn the paper when you have finished. Write down the entire experience that you are reacting to emotionally.

This paper-burning serves three purposes. First, it is symbolic to the subconscious that you are not going to react anymore to that particular problem. You have, through the act of writing it down, taken it out of the subconscious. Second, burning the paper means that no one else will read it, which might cause other problems. It also means



Exploring the states of mind, this seeker reflects on the nature of the subconscious by recalling his childhood. He remembers moments as a baby in his mother's lap, one summer day when he and a friend found a mango tree full of ripe fruits and his years of work mastering the drum.

that through the act of burning subconscious memories, you have released them forever.

When you begin to meditate, you become keen and perceptive enough to begin to see within yourself. Occasionally, you will see into the subconscious area and begin emotionally to relive the past. This means that many of the predominantly strong memory and reactionary patterns of the past loom up before you, one after another, and you may begin to react to them all over again, emotionally and even physically. These are not real experiences. It is only a layer of the subconscious exposing itself to your inner vision, indicating that reprogramming is needed.



The Subsubconscious Mind

The area of the subconscious mind formed when two thoughts or experiences of the same rate of intensity sent into the subconscious at different times intermingle and give rise to a new and totally different rate of vibration. This subconscious formation later causes the external mind to react to situations according to these accumulated vibrations, be they positive, negative or mixed.

THERE IS ONE AREA OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND THAT SEEMS rather devious and extremely hard to program. It is called the sub of the subconscious mind. It often could seem like faulty software in the computer. But when finally programmed correctly, it can become the greatest asset. It brings us good luck and assists with perfect timing through life. At times we feel as if nothing is happening to us anymore. Everything is going along smoothly. We walk up to a closed door and the door opens for us. We walk up to a telephone and it begins to ring. These signs show us that the subsubconscious is going along very nicely. As soon as we do not enjoy this fine timing, it is generally because of the sub of the subconscious area. For when two programs of a similar nature go into the subconscious computer at different times, they mix and mingle and form a third program within the subconscious that is difficult to fathom intellectually. This is recorded in the sub of the subconscious. For this reason, the sub of the subconscious mind seems awesome and foreboding. If both of the programs are good, beneficial, positive and spiritually vibrant, things go smoothly for us. But if they are not, this area of the subconscious can be very disturbing. Remedies are deep introspection and emotional-intellectual honesty. The subsubconscious can become very powerful, creating healthy new tendencies in this life and molding a dynamic personality.

Color shall be our example. Blue stands alone as a color, and so does yellow. When they merge, they make a third color, green, which creates a mood when you look upon it, different than the mood that arises from looking upon blue or yellow alone. Only in understanding that green is a composite of yellow and blue is the mystery dispelled. Add white to red and you get pink. Add water to soil and you get mud. This is easy to understand and shows the nature of impressions coming together in the subconscious. Add oxygen to hydrogen and you get water. That is a mystery which parallels the nature of the subsubconscious mind, a realm where one plus one equals three, while in the subconscious the sum is two.

Fathoming the Unfathomable

If psychological structures build up as problems in the subsubconscious and are not resolved, they can inhibit or hold back the superconscious. One then easily feels depressed and subject to many lower emotions. Then the concept that one is a self-effulgent being seems quite distant, indeed. When the subsubconscious build-up is problem free, superconsciousness is there, bringing success and well-being.

The subsubconscious concerns us primarily as the state of mind

which relates to congested subconscious force fields, or vasanas, caused by two similar intense emotional reactions at psychological moments. The resultant deeply suppressed emotions are puzzling to the seeker because, unless he is able to resolve through periodic review his subsubconscious, he may find them welling up from within him unbidden, and he knows not why. The subsubconscious influences us when we are encountering an experience similar to one that caused one of the two component reactions. This releases highly unexpected emotional responses, inobvious reactions and new behavioral patterns, some positive, some negative. The hybrid formation continues to react within the subsubconscious mind until resolved. Once understood, the mystery is gone. The vasana loses its emotional power. To a very great extent, it is the subsubconscious that harbors our subliminal aspirations, self-esteem, impulses toward success, neuroses and overall psychological behavior.

An example of this state of mind is as follows. A young man goes to an office party and accidentally spills coffee on his suit. Being a gentle, shy man, he becomes embarrassed and emotionally upset when everyone turns to look at him. Many months later, he attends his sister's wedding. In her excitement at the reception, she accidentally spills tea on her beautiful new sari. She is naturally embarrassed. But it is a psychological moment for him, intensified by his attachment to his sister, and he becomes more embarrassed for her than she is for herself.

A year later he discovers that each time he attends a social gathering, his solar plexus becomes upset, his digestion is affected, he gets a headache and has to leave. The fear mechanism, stimulated by the subsubconscious mind, is protecting him from another upsetting condition among a group of people. This continues for a number of years until the subsubconscious, in a semi-dream state, reveals itself to him and he sees clearly how the two reactionary thought patterns, caused by the dual experiences, met and merged and gave rise to a different conscious experience—the indigestion, the headaches and the dread of being among people. Once the obstacle was resolved in the light of understanding, he would be able to be among people in gatherings without these ill effects.

The Mind's Potent Alchemy

It is only when the emotionally charged experiences that go into the subconscious are of a strictly instinctive nature that the subsubconscious is uncomely or not beneficial and becomes a strong hindrance to well-being. On the other hand, experiences of a positive, intellectual or spiritual nature merging in the subconscious can create

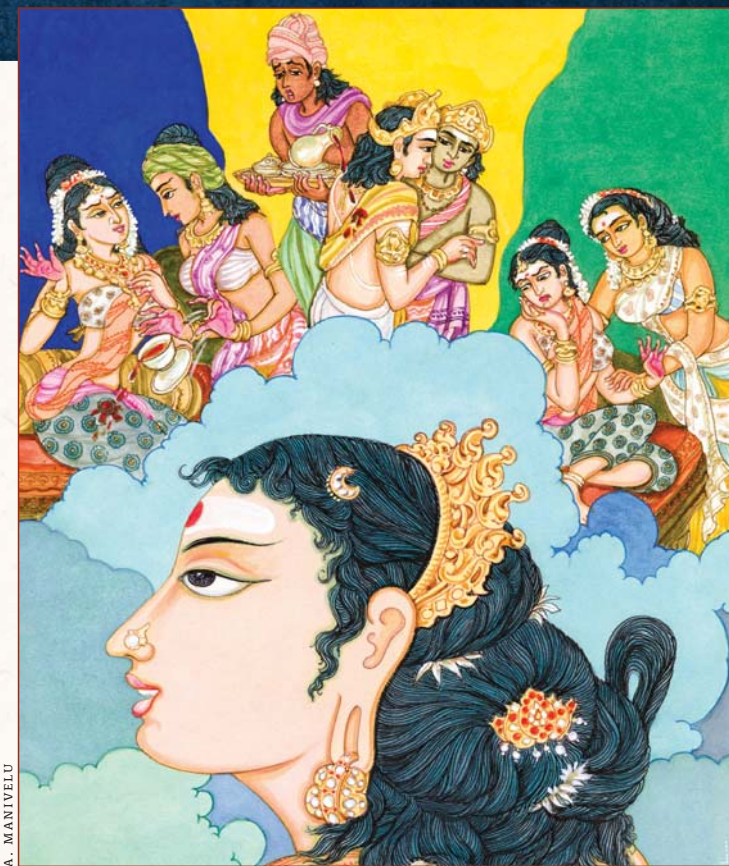
a subsubconscious that is quite dynamic and helpful, giving courage and competence in worldly affairs. Feelings of security, love and compassion can come up from the subsubconscious during psychological moments in one's life to counteract and eliminate or subdue feelings of jealousy, hatred and anger, which are natural to the instinctive mind.

For example, a man's business flourishes during the summer. The next winter he experiences great exhilaration and satisfaction at winning a skiing competition. The summer success and the winter accomplishment merging in the subconscious create a third, different impression which builds an abiding confidence and impulsion toward future victory. The next year, he goes into a second business and again prospers. The strong impression of being successful planted in the subsubconscious has created a positive habit pattern for the forces of the subsuperconscious to flow through.

The subsubconscious can also be formed by the blending of strong, intuitive, religious or mystical impressions. For instance, a devotee has an elevating vision of a Deity in an early morning dream or a conscious vision during meditation. A year later, while meditating, he has the experience of flying through the akasha in his astral body. These two impressions merge in the subconscious and create a deep-seated faith and unwavering certainty in the inner realities. Such vasanas bring up courage and eliminate the fear of death, replacing it with the assurance that life is eternal, the soul is real and the physical body is but a shell in which we live.

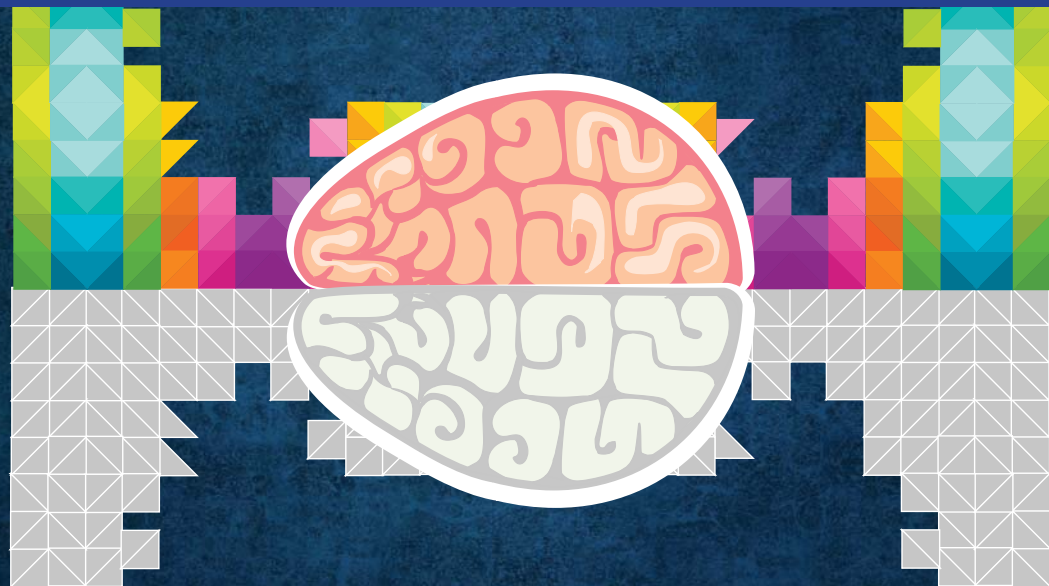
Resolution in Dreams

Through the powers of meditation, one can straighten out a few of the subsubconscious mind's predominant misprogrammings that cause tendencies that make us act in certain ways. The subsubconscious mind can be understood consciously when the thoughts which created this "sub" are traced. These will usually be found when the conscious mind is at its lowest ebb. When resting it is possible to study the sub of the subconscious mind with ease. The body is relaxed and the conscious mind has loosened its hold on external objects. When study has commenced, trace through the thought pictures consciously, without disturbing the overall picture. Take into consideration the fact that all thought stems from a series of influences within the ego. These influences take form and shape in thought. When you manifest pictures before you, trace them to their conception by holding the consciousness lightly over the mind, blotting out all distractions that may creep into the mind in an effort to disturb your consciousness. Take your findings, whatever they may



A subsubconscious complex is created when two similar experiences enter the subconscious, making a third. A woman recalls tea staining her sari at a party. Years later she sees coffee spilled on her husband. These experiences combine to create a fear of social events, just as blue and yellow create green.

be, and consciously think them through until all doubts have been dispelled. You will then find that through your conscious effort the sub of the subconscious mind has been understood consciously as well as subconsciously. Remember, however, that it is not necessary to remove each and every negative impression, one by one. Rather, we seek to strengthen the positive impressions. This in itself is sufficient and will allow unseemly impressions to be naturally resolved.



4

The Subsuperconscious Mind

This is the intuitive state, which brings clarity, creativity and insight. It functions when the subconscious is quiet, allowing the superconscious to work through both the conscious and subconscious states.

THE SUBSUPERCONSCIOUS MIND IS THE AREA OF THE SUPERCONSCIOUS that has a subconscious which is connected with the physical-body functions and everyday life affairs. The subsuperconscious state is the total man, functioning at a higher vibratory rate than he did when in the instinctive-intellectual area. What is the subsuperconscious mind? It is the superconscious of the devotee well-programmed in the contemplative life. This devotee can work with himself and move awareness freely through any area of the mind that he wants to, consciously, without being hindered by habit patterns and reactionary conditions of the past which were programmed in the subconscious for him by parents, schoolteachers, friends and the public in general as he came along through life from birth.

When your timing is perfect and everything works correctly around you, things happen as you expect them to happen, or even better, you are in the subsuperconscious area of the mind. Certainly you are not in the subconscious area or in the external conscious mind. You are subsuperconscious. You are aware within the inner realms and the external realms at the same time. When you feel stationary, stable, as if the whole world stopped and there is only you in the center, and yet you are able to converse with your friends—this is a subsuperconscious state. Subsuperconsciousness is really awareness traveling, propelled by energy and willpower.

The devotee who has developed the subsuperconscious area of the mind can sit quietly as a being of pure cosmic energy and observe the many thoughts of the mind without being affected by them. The intuitive knowing that we are pure awareness, the soul, and not the thoughts that we think gives the security to move from concentration into deeper meditation. The subsuperconscious state gives that inherent feeling of inner stability, the feeling of being stationary or centered within the realms of the thinking mind.

Man in the subsuperconscious area of the mind in meditation is sitting as a being of pure energy. Even if many thoughts go past his vision, he knows he is flowing through the world of thought as a subsuperconscious state of awareness. Awareness is in a stationary state within the realms of the thinking mind. When we are out of the thinking mind, we are in the conceptual, subsuperconscious areas.

Defining the Subsuperconscious

The subsuperconscious mind is a quiet subconscious. That is actually what it is. It is the subconscious that has been made to be peaceful by putting into it a contemplative lifestyle. It is a receptacle for the

superconscious areas of mind to permeate the physical body from the psyche, so that the body of the soul can look out through the eyes of the physical body, radiate through the cells of the physical body and allow superconscious rays to radiate out through the aura.

Would you like to try to locate the subsuperconscious state of mind? Look at the room around you. That is the conscious mind you are aware in. Next, focus on your feelings and be aware of what you are thinking. You are now aware in the subconscious mind. Next, feel your spiritual identity, feel the power in your spine. Sit up straight. Feel powerful energy on the inside of your spinal cord. At the same time you are identified with being the energy in the spine, and separating the feeling of energy from the physical spine, look at the room around you and become conscious of your personal thoughts and feelings.

Doing this brings you into a subsuperconscious state, because you are conscious of your superconsciousness, the power and energy and life and spiritual forces resident right within the body. Simultaneously, you are conscious of your thinking faculty, the room around you and yourself as being pure energy. It is that easy to be in a subsuperconscious state, more difficult to remain in it for long periods of time.

The feeling of the eternity of the moment is experienced upon the first arrival into the subsuperconscious state of mind. This occurs when the subconscious state of mind is in a quiescent state, a state of full receptivity to superconsciousness. It has not been destroyed, but has been purified of all barriers, such as negative attachments. When this occurs, the devotee has the feeling that there is no future, there is no past, and the only reality is the eternity of the moment.

Great vistas of creativity are opened to those who learn to keep open and receptive to the subsuperconscious mind. Music, art, drama and dance flow most spontaneously, and answers to questions in the subconscious, previously unanswered, come forth in intuitive flashes, without the use of reason, while not conflicting with reason. A feeling of contentment and confidence resides within an individual who has learned to consciously identify and use the subsuperconscious mind.

Security in the Superconscious

When the superconscious forces diminish, the subsuperconscious mind, in effect, recedes from the actual consciousness of the devotee, and he becomes simply conscious of his subconscious mind. In the very same way, from time to time, the conscious mind overshadows the subconscious mind, and the devotee becomes conscious fully in

the external world, the subconscious mind receding from his conscious awareness of it. Therefore, the object of the devotee is to control the materialistic forces and the impressions that they create in his mind, so that he can become consciously conscious in the state of mind he chooses.

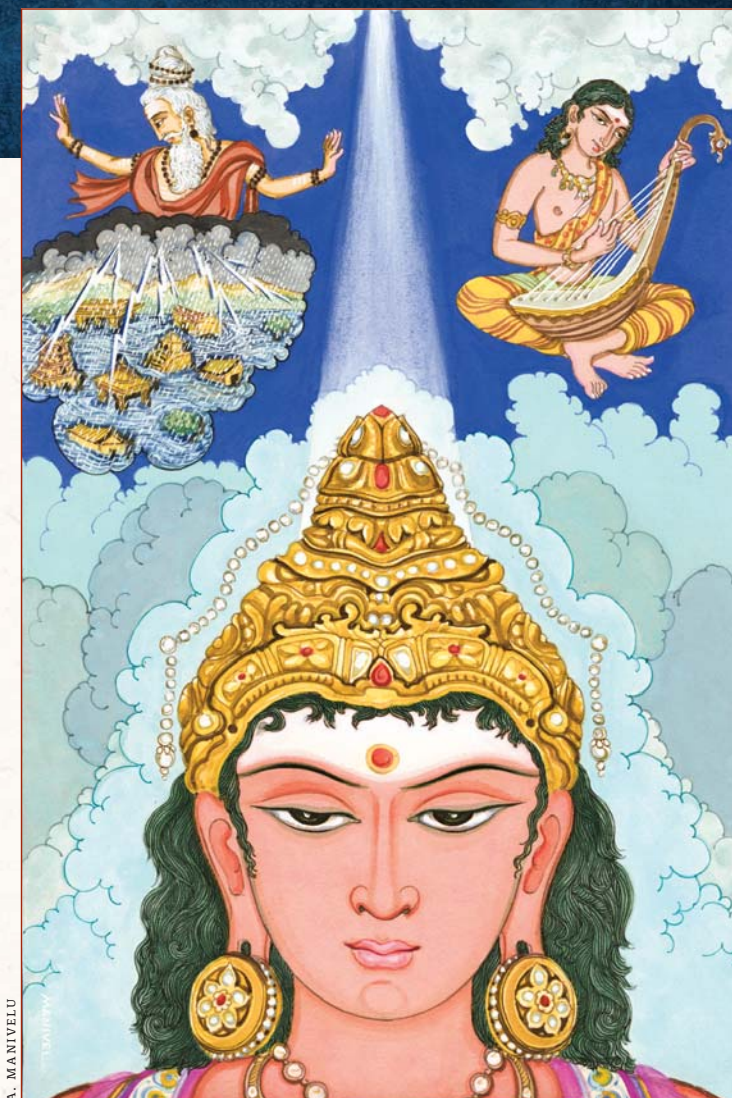
Meditation is conscious use of the subsuperconscious mind to solve problems that confront us in our daily activity and derive creative solutions from the inner recesses of our own mind. Another way of using the superconscious forces is through affirmation. When you say to yourself, "I'm all right, right now," you immediately bring the forces of the mind together. All fears, worries and doubts cease. An influx of actinic energy fills the subconscious, and a sense of dynamic security permeates your being.

The Flow of Creativity

A devotee who can command his mind to be instantly creative, and be consistently successful, has acquired a conscious control of the use of the subsuperconscious state of mind. This is because the subconscious mind—made of odic force, a sticky-like substance that absorbs impressions, holds impressions and files them (not always, however, in an organized way)—has been understood, dissolved and brought in line with the cosmic forces through living a religious life. In this pure condition, the devotee's attempts to direct his own mental forces are quite naturally successful. Unobstructed, the superconscious forces flow into the life of the devotee, and creativity is in abundance. Once the first breakthrough has been made, we find that these brilliant rays from the cosmic mind—which we also call Satchidananda, the mind of God Śiva, the Gods and your immortal soul—penetrate the sticky-like substance of the subconscious, reorganizing and purifying it.

The next time you feel physically, mentally or emotionally fatigued, use your willpower to command access to the cosmic energies that exist deep inside of you. Do not allow the body or mind to fall into lethargic, depressed states. Feel the life forces stirring, flowing out to invigorate every cell of your being.

When you can see a white light aglow in your head in a darkened room, or even see a flash of it, or hear the inner, high-pitched sound, "eee," humming in your inner ear, then you know that you are consciously functioning in the subsuperconscious state of mind. Devotees who have had their first flash of white light in their head or heard the constant high-pitched "eee" in their inner ear have awakened the process of the subsuperconscious state of mind, and it works quite automatically after that. All they have to do is to



The subsuperconscious mind becomes the daily experience of devotees unhindered by reactionary patterns. Here a seeker sees light in his head and spine, and hears the nada, a vina-like inner sound. He inwardly cognizes and resolves his karmas, shown as a thunderstorm.

learn how to consciously use their subsuperconscious transcendental powers. All this will naturally occur through their continued sadhana.



5

The Superconscious Mind

The mind of light, the all-knowing intelligence of the soul. The Sanskrit term is *turiya*, “the fourth,” meaning the condition beyond the states of “wakefulness” (*jagrat*), “dream” (*svapna*), and “deep sleep” (*sushupti*). At its deepest level, the superconscious is *Parashakti*, or *Satchidananda*, the Divine Mind of God Siva.

WE HAVE TO ADJUST OUR SUBCONSCIOUS TO THE IDEA THAT we are a superconscious being, rather than an instinctive being or an intellectual being driven by the impulses of the five senses. Awareness is the core of us. If we dropped off this physical body today, we would be a superconscious being without a physical body.

When Are You Superconscious?

It is easier to know when you are not superconscious than when you are superconscious, because your superconsciousness is such a natural state. It is such a beautiful state. It is such a full, wholesome state to be in, that you are not aware generally that you are superconscious. When you are not feeling too well within yourself, you are not superconscious. When you are feeling really good and satisfied within yourself, you are superconscious. When your timing is right, when everything is happening just right during the day, you are superconscious. When nothing seems to be happening right, then your awareness is flowing through one of the congested areas of the thought realm. When everything seems to be going wrong, you are flowing through an instinctive area or a congested intellectual area. When you are arguing with yourself, you are not superconscious. You are flowing through an area of the intellectual mind, taking two points of view and flowing from one to another. When discussing something with someone, you are not superconscious, for superconsciousness is a one-way street. You speak right from the core of existence without really thinking about what you are going to say. You just speak out and hear what you said afterwards.

When you are arguing with someone, you are not superconscious. You have moved into a congested area of the thought strata of the mind and you are verbalizing it, and are congesting the aura, too. Then awareness has to be unwound from that area of the mind and directed back again to superconsciousness. When you are disturbed about yesterday, or even have a consciousness that there was a yesterday, you are not in a superconscious state. When you are afraid, you are not in a superconscious state. When you are peaceful, when you are calm, when you are in the eternity of the moment, when you feel secure on the inside of you, you are in a superconscious state. Superconsciousness is not something you will get, because you have never been without it. You are superconscious this very minute, and functioning in all five states of the mind.

Be Aware of Energy

Become aware of the totality of Being. This does not take a lot of time.

The easiest way, the simplest way, is to be aware of the spine and the energies within the head. Locate the consciousness of energy. Be aware of energy. When you are aware of energy, you automatically forget what you were previously aware of and it fades away. You leave the consciousness of the instinctive-intellectual area of the mind and move into superconsciousness. If you can remain totally centered in awareness of the energy within your spine and the energy within the head, you become aware of the same energy within everybody and everything you see. You are immediately in a superconscious state when this happens.

Therefore, the simple goal is, stay in this consciousness of energy for the rest of your life. It is just that easy, but it is not quite that simple to accomplish, because you have already trained your awareness to move into other channels of the mind, and it will do that automatically as soon as you cease to be aware of the energy within the spine. Then you forget that you are a superconscious, immortal being and begin to think you are only temporal. You may begin to think that there is a past, or that there is a future, and begin to feel that the eternal now is an insecure time. You may find yourself beginning to lean on other people rather than on your own spine. When you discover this happening, then begin to meditate. Go deep within yourself again and find superconsciousness. Seek the company of people who center their awareness within. This will make it easier for you to do so. Being around people who center awareness in the external areas of the mind is difficult because they draw your awareness into the external areas of the thought strata.

People who really value awareness being “hooked,” shall we say, into the inner areas of energy, and have studied that function of energy, draw your awareness into it. When this happens, you begin to see from inside out. You actually see from the inside of everything that you look at to the exterior of it. You look at a tree. You first see the energy within the tree. The bark is the last thing you see. When you are in an outer consciousness, first you see the bark of the tree and then you intellectually surmise that there must be energies within it because you happen to notice that a leaf is growing and assume that it must be alive. How awkward awareness is when it is stumbling around in the external area of the mind. And how smooth awareness flows freely when it is dynamically cruising into inner layers of inner space.

We shall now compare the superconscious mind to an onion of seven layers, each interior layer more subtle than the outer ones. 1) Experiencing the consciousness of the eternity of the moment, as if the world was revolving around you; 2) Experiencing a cosmic

energy, a divine force, flowing through your external mind which is more real to you than the external mind itself; 3) Experiencing hearing voices singing, music playing—the divine sounds of the flute, *mridangam*, *vina* and *tambura*—while in meditation or early in the morning just before awakening; 4) Experiencing seeing the faces of Gods or devas, or a rishi’s face, looking into yours while in meditation or early in the morning just before awakening; 5) Experiencing the peace and inner poise of the all-pervasive *Satchidananda*; 6) Experiencing the *anandamaya kosha*, the body of the soul, as it comes into conscious union with the physical body; 7) Experiencing being on the brink of the Absolute, *Parasiva*, the void, having lost consciousness of the physical body and of being any of the five states of mind. These seven states of superconsciousness are only a few, to be sure, of this vast area of mind.

Learn to Move Awareness

You must not think the superconscious mind is way out of your reach simply because of the word *super*, because it is quite the contrary. It is within you. It has always been within you. All you have to do is to reprogram the subconscious a little and move awareness out of the conscious mind, and your journey is within. You are superconscious now. You have to accept that. You do not have to “get to be” superconscious. This is not something that is going to happen to you all of a sudden and then cause you to be different. The thing that is going to happen to you is that you will release your individual awareness from the so-called bondages of the habit patterns of the external mind that it had been accustomed to flowing through. Once it is released, you will automatically flow into other inner areas of the mind because you have been studying about them and now have the map clearly outlined for you.

You might be wondering why, if you are supposed to be superconscious right now, you have not had the wonderful experiences that I have told you about. This is easy to answer. You may be superconscious now but not consciously superconscious all of the time, or even for long enough periods to have these beautiful experiences. Though you are superconscious right now, awareness is still externalized enough that you touch into it only a little bit and then are pulled back to the subconscious or to the conscious mind.

Through regular practice of meditation, one learns to move awareness through the superconscious areas like a dancer learns to move across the stage according to the rhythm of the music. It takes much practice for the dancer to acquire the technique in the preparation of himself to fulfill his calling. He has to live a disciplined lifestyle.



*As the superconscious awakens, the seeker's third eye, the *ajna chakra*, reveals a world of inner peace and mystical experience. This woman sees Siva dancing atop her head, His anklet softly jingling as blissful energies, symbolized by flowers, flood her nervous system.*

It is the same for the contemplative. He has to work with and exercise the currents of awareness so dynamically that he can flow into a superconscious area and remain there long enough to look around a little bit and enjoy it.



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CONFERENCE

New Delhi's World Hindu Congress

3,000 movers and shakers from all over the planet made history at the World Hindu Congress in New Delhi, signaling a new era for the Hindu Renaissance

BY FRANÇOIS GAUTIER, NEW DELHI

THREE THOUSAND PEOPLE HELD THEIR breath as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Shri Mohanrao Bhagwat and Shri Ashok Singhal opened the World Hindu Congress in the majestic hall of New Delhi's Ashoka Hotel. Those who entered these chambers walked into a little part of history. "We in Tibet were in Darkness, and the Light came from India," smiled the Dalai Lama, who later called himself "a good Hindu." He continued, "Hindus are our brothers and sisters and we owe much to India, the refuge they gave us when the Chinese invaded our country." But the Dalai Lama's speech was not all flowery praise. In his inimitably jovial way, he praised past gurus of India while taking modern teachers to task as having become too materialistic, offering that Buddhists today are the more "reliable Hindus." He was not finished: "Instead of so many rituals, why don't we see more Hindu institutes in the world that would help propagate this wonderful knowledge!"

He received a standing ovation from the

colorful crowd—Tibetans in ochre robes, swamis in sunrise garb, gurus in white, laymen in all kinds of clothes and, remarkably for a Hindu meet, many Westerners who have converted to Hinduism and become the rare defenders of Hindus. Amongst those were David Frawley, the famous American ayurvedic scholar who was just awarded Padma Bhushan by the government of India; Koenraad Elst, a Belgium-born writer and disciple of Sitaram Goel; Edward Carpenter, an American scholar; and, of course, some of our very own swamis from HINDUISM TODAY from distant Hawaii.

Shri Mohanrao Bhagwat, in his turn, borrowed from Swami Vivekananda: "Let us shine. Let us provide leadership to the world. Let us not stop 'till the goal is reached." Speaking brilliantly without notes, he outlined the tasks for the next two decades so that a true Indian renaissance could manifest. "We need to realize the sameness of humanity in the world, and only Hindu society can deliver this message, 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam.' A Hindu means a human being who

seeks unity in all diversity."

Shri Ashok Singhal spoke more militantly: "Eight centuries after the reign of the last Hindu king, Prithviraj Chauhan, proud Hindus have finally come to rule Delhi," he thundered. He spoke forcefully about the challenges that Hindus are facing today: "It is necessary to make Hindus invincible so that every Hindu and indeed everyone should live with dignity and respect. It's time to create a Hindu *mahashakti* (superpower) in the world. It's time for an indomitable Hinduism for the welfare of the entire world."

Indeed, many of us sitting there felt that Hindu power had finally returned. After too many centuries of subjugation and humiliation, after six decades of political and intellectual Marxist rule, which methodically belittled Hindus and brought them to the status of a maligned minority in a country where they are the ancestral and demographic majority—after all this, power was returning at last to those who have always given refuge to persecuted minorities.

Organized by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad

(VHP), this conference, held from November 21-23, 2014, brought 1,500 official delegates from 50 countries and a like number of observers. For the first time, too, most of the TV channels, media houses and the capital's newspapers attended a Hindu event. (Ordinarily they ignore or bash such gatherings). This was no minor function. Over 200 speakers, including several Union Ministers, educationists, economists, bankers and diverse professionals, participated over three days in seven conferences and 45 sessions, providing ample opportunity to discuss the issues affecting Hindu society.

The inspired organizer, Swami Vigyananand, emphasized in his introductory address that as Hinduism moves forward in the 21st century, "it has to be strategically placed to influence the crucial areas of economy, education, media and politics in the world." When he blew the conch to declare the Congress open, it had been 121 years since Swami Vivekananda delivered his earth-shaking address at the Chicago Parliament in 1893, opening the gates for Hindu Dharma to spread across the world. Now, in a return of the tide, Hindus from all over the world had traveled to New Delhi to debate the mechanisms of a long-overdue resurgence of Hindu knowledge and Indian civilization.

Seven Simultaneous Conferences

Intent on achieving palpable progress, the organizers ran seven conferences side by side. It was a kind of dharmic circus as crushing crowds moved from one hall to another, along the way meeting, sharing, conversing and networking in the midst of a rolling river of humanity.

The most attended by far was the World Hindu Economic Forum, "Thriving Economy, Prospering Society." Indian businessmen attended from all over the world—bankers from Mumbai, heads of US corporations, CEOs from Barbados, Fiji and Mauritius. Indeed, after centuries of colonization and still more decades of disparagement, the Hindu renaissance seemed poised for a solid economic foundation, one that would attract serious attention to India.

Five action points were agreed upon: Global market access to Hindu businesses; accessible availability of affordable capital for the Hindu entrepreneur; collaboration on technological fronts; providing professional support; and encouraging young and budding entrepreneurs through mentorship, capital and networking.

Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari shared that he has "set a target to build 30 km of roads per day in the next two years" to help repair India's infrastructure, which remains in a pitiable state. He spoke of India's rich legacy of yoga and the traditional system of medicine: "We can be



The Leaders: (opposite, left to right) Dr. Mohanrao Bhagwat, Shri Ashok Singal, the Dalai Lama, Justice C.V. Wigneswaran from Sri Lanka, and Shri G. Raghava Reddy light the ceremonial lamp; (above) Swami Vigyananand, whose vision created the Congress, addresses the delegates on opening day.

number one in the world, and our thinking can give much-needed direction to the world." He also affirmed, "The Ganga River's cleanliness and revival are among the BJP's priority tasks."

The lively political conference, "Responsible Democracy for All," had a recurring theme: the billion-strong Hindu society should ensure responsible and accountable democracy "by channeling the democratic propensity of Hindu people worldwide." Participants discussed how Hindu politicians can come to a common platform, cutting across party lines to address issues of safety and security where Hindus are vulnerable. According to Dr. Ajay Chrunghoo, chairman of Panun Kashmir, an organization of displaced Kashmiri Hindus, "Despite more than 350,000 Hindus being pushed out of the Kashmir Valley over the years, the political class across the spectrum in the country, including the BJP, still considers it a minor issue." Tapan Gosh, one of today's most courageous Hindu activists, made it clear that other areas of the country, such as West Bengal, are in danger of becoming another Kashmir. Gosh fights against infiltrations of Bangladeshis in West Bengal, where Hindus are becoming a minority and are even attacked, their temples vandalized, their women raped. Attendees also heard the pleas of the persecuted Yazidi community in Syria and Iraq, whose women are sold as slaves by ISIS.

Unfortunately upstaged by other conferences was a debate here on Sri Lanka's Hindus. C.V. Wigneswaran, chief minister of Sri Lanka's Northern Province, related that

the community's hardships have continued long after the government's war with the LTTE ended in 2009: eighty percent of Hindu homes in Sri Lanka were damaged since 1998; 95,000 Tamil Hindus lost their lives in the civil war, leaving 48,000 Tamil widows in Sri Lanka; 13,000 men were disabled, and many of those who surrendered are still missing; many young girls were raped when the LTTE was defeated; and 7000 square km of Tamil lands have been seized by the Sri Lankan army. Because Bharat is the motherland of Hindus, Wigneswaran said, Bharat must allay the suffering of Hindus in neighboring countries, especially in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh; furthermore, Hindus worldwide must mobilize resources to address the economic needs of neighboring Hindu communities that are suffering.

The media conference, "Truth Is Supreme while Reporting, Informing and Presenting," underscored the fact that most Indian media are controlled by big groups that are inimical to the Hindu ethos and that Hindus are also portrayed negatively in the West. Various ideas were proposed: that we create a professional TV channel, as did Al Jazeera, to regularly articulate our point of view; that we actually poach star anchors and broadcasters from major channels like BBC or CNN; and that following the election of Mr. Modi the Indian media have changed their tone somewhat, hopefully indicating a dawning sense of pride and nationalism. But someone quickly pointed out that the Indian media schools keep churning out young journalists in the Marxist mold, and so the change must



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start there. Some proposed the media not use the word *Hinduism*, but adopt instead Sanatana Dharma or Indic Civilization. This magazine's editor responded with a firm call to "not be afraid of the 'H' word, since we are never going to change the name of our religion in the rest of the world. We need to embrace the word with pride."

One of the most spirited debates was "Responding to Socio-Cultural Challenges Before Hindu Society." During a heated discussion of conversions, one delegate stated that after the 2004 tsunami, Christian missionaries converted some four percent of the coastal area between Chennai and Kanyakumari. Conversion remains a hot issue in India.

In the cultural conference, many attendees agreed that the "Nehruvian" outlook "has diluted the richness and dignity of Bharat's culture by reducing it to a show of government-sponsored Bharat Natyam dance and Indian classical singing." Others expressed anger that the very authenticity and historicity of our noble sacred texts, such as the *Vedas*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, have been challenged by the official historians of the Nehruvian school. Too much of Indian history, as portrayed in both Indian and Western texts, was written by the British and blindly adopted by Nehru and subsequent historians. The foundation of all Indian and Western history books, for example, is the Aryan invasion. This theory still prevails in academic circles, despite having been proven false by recent archaeological and linguistic research as well as spatial imagery—as the Frenchman Michel Danino has detailed in his book *The Invasion that Never Was*. One panelist pointed out that the bloody invasions of India by various hordes, starting with Alexander the Great, "have been swept under the carpet by

historians since Independence, for good and bad reasons—and something needs to be done." There was a sense of agreement that no nation can move forward unless it faces squarely its history, just as the United States is finally acknowledging how it decimated the indigenous Native American population.

Women, Education, Youth and Rights

The conference on women's issues, themed "The Increasing Role of Women in Hindu Resurgence," focused on four main concerns: increasing involvement of women in decision making; developing leadership qualities; improving the quality of women's lives in the rural and disadvantaged localities; and strengthening economic status, notably through encouraging small-scale entrepreneurship. Addresses were given by Union Ministers Smriti Irani and Mrs. Seetharaman, environmental activist Vandana Shiva, former IPS officer Kiran Bedi and by activist Madhu Kishwar, who discussed the role women can play in Indian politics and urged them to become once again as powerful as their counterparts were in ancient times. Mrs. Seetharaman urged the women "not to keep a low profile in the field of politics, otherwise you will be lost." I could not help but reflect that the first woman Prime Minister in the world was Srimavo Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka, that Indira Gandhi ruled India for nearly 20 years with an iron hand, and even two Islamic countries, Pakistan and Bangladesh, twice had women Prime Ministers—all this due to the pervading and enduring influence of the *shakti* concept in South Asia.

In the education conference, "Creating and Networking Educational Resources for National Re-emergence," academics and university administrators discussed how to "Indianize" education, which still follows the

Macaulayan model—the education imparted by the British to a handful of elite Indians during colonial times. They brainstormed how to raise the quality of higher education institutions, stressing affordability and accessibility for all. Steven Rudolph, director of the Jiva Public School at Faribabad, with 1,600 students from lower kindergarten to 12th grade—a unique school which integrates a modern syllabus with Vedic values—shared their educational methodology and described their plans "to establish a Hindu university where students from all over the world can come and study the foundational scriptures of the Sanatana Dharma."

The youth conference, "Together Towards Tomorrow," conducted by the Hindu Student Youth Network, spotlighted the disconnect between today's Indian youth and their roots. Nothing is taught them at an early age about their great poets, such as Kalidasa, their great warriors, like Shivaji Maharaj, and all their marvelous saints, gurus and avatars. "How is it," someone asked, "that Sri Aurobindo, India's great poet, philosopher, revolutionary and yogi, is not part of the philosophical curriculum in Indian universities?" It was agreed that Indian youth should understand crucial areas of economy, education, media and politics which are necessary for the progress of the Hindu community, as they will be responsible for propelling Hindus forward in each of these areas. They must be helped to develop the necessary capabilities, knowledge and leadership skills. Suresh (Bhaiyyaji) Joshi of RSS (Rashtriya Swam-sevak Sangha) made it clear: "The challenge before the country today is the preservation of its culture and civilization." He challenged participants to rise to the task and identified five malicious forces, "M5," which threaten the preservation of the Hindu ethos: Marx-

A Celebration: (left) Delegates and speakers join to declare their feelings about the Congress; (top right) Abhaya Ashtana, Ved Nanda and Shri Sushil Pandit, leaders of three subconferences, report their groups' conclusions to the plenary on the final day, (below) 1,500 participants at the opening ceremonies; (inset) the famed Ashoka Hotel.

ism, Macaulayism, Missionaries, Materialism and Muslim extremism.

Prof. Ved Nanda, from Colorado, summarized: "The session I chaired on human rights addressed the violations Hindus have faced in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Kashmir, discussing the plight of the Romas and Yazidis. The pioneering work of Global Human Rights Defence in the Netherlands and the Hindu American Foundation in the US, seeking to protect Hindus' human rights in several countries and influencing decision-makers in Europe and the US, met with thundering applause from a packed house. Both are relatively new yet have had an enormous impact on world public opinion while influencing decision-makers to take effective measures."

The Wrap-up... and the Future

The concluding plenary, with all present, covered three main issues:

(1) Hindus should create a visible presence in all discourses on human rights around the world. Rights violations of Hindus continue, especially in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Middle East, Indonesia and also among the Roma and Yazidi.

(2) Hindus must work together to counter the destructive and unethical evangelical efforts which are converting Hindus and other indigenous communities of the world on a massive scale, run by evangelical faiths like Christianity and Islam which are backed by huge economic resources and organizational strength. These conversions are a clear and direct threat to family integrity, regional harmony and world stability.

(3) Hindu academics agreed to coordinate a strong joint response to the overtly biased challenges of Western academics who deliberately misrepresent and denigrate Hindus.

On the final day all heard the call of "Sangachchhadhwam Samvadadhvam" (Step Together, Express Together) for a Hindu Renaissance. But there are still many hurdles to overcome. Strategic issues were pinpointed: development of an Institute of Indology which would enhance India's image abroad and thus increase outside investments; better accessibility to cabinet ministers; amending the entrenched media hostility toward Hinduism; transforming the educational system; calling on our many saints and gurus for guidance; cutting back on the exorbitant



VIP security costs that have become a status symbol in the nation; even working to reduce the high cost of aviation fuel which is impeding the nation.

Many of us felt that history had been made here. For the first time since the last Hindu empire of Vijayanagar, Hindus proudly gathered to remind the world that every sixth human being on this planet is the inheritor of the most ancient Living Knowledge.

For more than twenty centuries—from Alexander the Great, to the first Arab invasions, then the British, Portuguese, Dutch and French—Hindus have been colonized, persecuted, converted by force and killed, creating in the Hindu community a self-loathing and fear that makes them cringe and retreat at the least hint of danger. Miraculously, Hinduism survived and suddenly, Hindus came out of hiding, traveling from India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Fiji, US, UK, Canada, Bangladesh and Pakistan. They stood together and shouted: "We are here. We have been on this Earth at least ten thousand years and we have much to give to the world."

Nor were these the old guard, though they led the charge. These were Hindu youth—and modern Hindu youth—with their smartphones, iPads and social networking apps: software geeks, engineers, writers, advocates, doctors, bankers and businessmen in Western attire. India is one of the youngest nations, with a median age of 25 compared to Japan's 48 and America's 35. The new Hindus have arrived. They are savvy, connected and hungry for change, and for its partner, power.

I have attended many such conferences, and seen that they provoke few real changes. But this one was different; it was a tangible symbol, a sign, an occult happening. Swami Vivekananda's and Sri Aurobindo's call for a renaissance of India has begun.

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François Gautier, author of *A History of India as it Happened* (Har Anand, New Delhi), is building a Museum of Indian History in Pune (fact-india.com). Visit: francoisgautier.com

Calling Parents to Action!

Let's take advantage of the openness and flexibility of our educational system which allows parents to be actively involved in their child's school

BY TUSHAR PANDYA

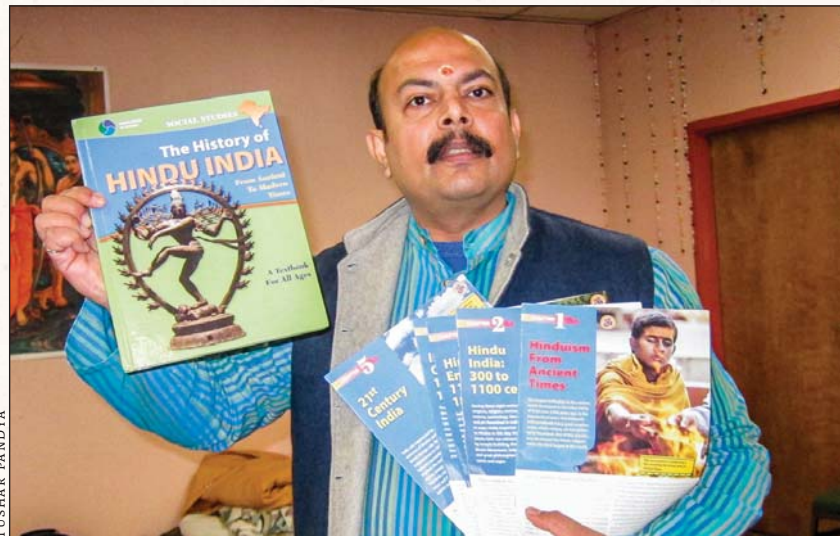
THE PRESENTATION OF RELIGIONS, CULTURES and civilizations throughout school have a strong impact on the self-identity of students. The resulting opinions formed in classrooms and through a child's peers wield great influence throughout their lives. This is especially evident in middle school and particularly the 6th grade. It is vital that parents actively participate in shaping the way Hinduism is presented in schools.

In K-12 education in the US, Hinduism is discussed primarily—and very briefly—in the 6th grade. For many students, their classes on ancient civilizations offer them their one and only exposure to Hinduism throughout school. This is simply not enough and needs to change. Other religions are addressed over multiple years, allowing a study of central religious concepts in multiple contexts.

Hinduism is fundamentally different from other religions. Its all-encompassing nature embraces a complex diversity of traditions, practices and philosophies, while other religions strive for homogeneity. Presenting Hinduism in the same simple light as Abrahamic religions creates many misunderstandings. Hinduism needs to be presented from a Hindu perspective. We have a great tradition where science, astronomy, mathematics, linguistics, music and art are embedded in religion. It is this brilliant, inherently sustainable, holistic nature that has made our tradition long lasting.

In today's US school system, children are encouraged to seek different sources, compare them and look for evidence of support. There has never been a more opportune time to improve the presentation of our religion. There are massive amounts of misinformation about our faith. In correcting this we face serious challenges: benign ignorance, the Abrahamic missionary mindset and the widespread secular humanist, atheist, anti-religious, anti-spiritual views of our culture—with everything portrayed through European goggles. A top-down approach to changing curriculum and teaching standards is fundamental, but educated parents can make a big difference right now in their local communities, one school at a time. With new laws and funding formulas, especially in California, schools have flexibility and considerable freedom in choosing teaching materials. We need to be active in making our voice heard as teachers and districts look for ways to better teach youth about India and Hinduism.

Let me share my experience. I have two daughters, one just completing 6th grade and the other finishing 7th. In my older daughter's middle school, the social studies teacher also taught English. The final Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) tests address English but not social science, so her teacher focused on language. The class never studied Hinduism. I was glad my daughter was not exposed



Our textbook goes to school: Tushar Pandya is avidly promoting the use of *The History of Hindu India* by parents and teachers in California

to the misinformation in the textbooks—which would have been problematic for her—but this was still less than ideal, so I decided to start a dialog with the principal and the superintendent about it. The superintendent encouraged me to give presentations at the school. Both were aware of the issues and understood that bringing about a shift in traditional teaching or changing the mindset of teachers takes time and effort applied in a variety of areas.

I learned that my younger daughter's 6th grade teacher did have plans to introduce world cultures and religions, so I wrote to her praising her decision. I also pointed out that while other religions are presented in a fair and systematic way—covering their saints, scriptures, theology and positive features—Hinduism is presented in a mostly negative way. I asserted that perpetuating the misinformation about Hinduism is not in the best interest of children or the community. It amounts to a failure in preparing our children to be tomorrow's informed leaders in a global world. I offered her alternative materials and said I would be happy to help as a guest speaker.

The teacher wrote back agreeing with me and acknowledging the hypocritical double standard. She concurred that it is wrong to present minority cultures in a negative light, especially when these cultures are part of our local communities. It is simply not healthy. She told me that a post-9/11 class presentation by a Muslim group had made a huge impact on her.

When I met with this teacher in person, she lamented her ignorance of any religion other than her own (Catholicism), having never studied them in school. She confessed that she was uncomfortable about discussing religion in classrooms, not being certain of the

parameters. How should she respond to questions such as "Is there a God?" She had her own beliefs but didn't want to be disrespectful of others or unconsciously proselytize any faith.

I gave her copies of Chapter One of *The History of Hindu India*, written by the editors of HINDUISM TODAY in collaboration with eminent Hindu historian Dr. Shiva Bajpai, and showed her the lesson plans for teachers, all available on the Himalayan Academy website (www.himalayanacademy.com/hhi). I also gave her a copy of Chapter Two, which covers the period from 300-1100 CE, and recommended the 23-minute *History of Hindu India* movie produced by the same team, which can parallel the Hollywood movie the children are shown when studying Judaism.

The teacher wrote back, excited about *The History of Hindu India* and how it offers a more rounded view, showing both the ancient and modern relevance of Hinduism. She had learned a lot from it and decided to base her instruction on Chapter One. Time permitting, she would present the California textbook as well, allowing the kids to compare and contrast these sources and learn how widely presentations can differ. Chapter Two would be reading material for advanced students. She also gratefully accepted my offer to speak to the class, saying such visits inspire the kids and can cover a lot of ground in a short time. Various school district administrators have admitted that the social science curriculum is dry and a guest speaker can bring the material to life.

The children listened to my talk with rapt attention. The Q&A session showed how hungry they were to learn about Hinduism. Many stayed on after the bell rang and came forward to ask more questions. Some had done their own prior research on the subject.

My lecture covered five points. First, we talked about the *Vedas* and Sanskrit. I showed how our principal scriptures, the *Vedas*, preserved through oral tradition, impact everyday life. Then I touched on the *Vedangas*—scientific texts covering linguistics, astronomy, mathematics and music. I kept things lively by interspersing historic facts on Hindu contributions to the world and to modern science. Next we covered four core Hindu concepts: karma, reincarnation, moksha and One God manifesting in many forms. I covered a lot of ground, knowing this was likely the only introduction to Hinduism many of them would have in their entire life. I strived to speak at their 11-year old level. The candid words of one 6th grader: "No one in class reads social-science textbooks. They do not understand what the books are talking about."

My experience with the 7th grade teacher was different. At this stage students study medieval world history, from about 300 CE to 1300 CE. India was the Earth's most populous nation during this period, contributing around 30 percent of world GDP—but the school textbook contained no references to India. The teacher acknowledged the book's Eurocentric view and hoped that the upcoming Common Core State Standard would be more global. Despite new laws allowing teachers flexibility, she noted that present standards do not require her to teach about India. She gratefully accepted *The History of Hindu India* material and promised to try to include it in coming years. I am pursuing this issue with the superintendent to obtain more satisfactory results.

Many parents are hesitant to broach this issue with schools, concerned that they or their children will stand out in a negative way. My experience was the opposite: teachers and administrators



Mission to Sacramento: Acharya Arumuganathaswami, Dr. Shiva Bajpai (sixth from left), Tushar Pandya (to Shivaji's right), Dr. Nalini Rao (third from left), students and their parents gather outside before the Department of Education sign following a meeting of the Department's Instructional Quality Commission at which each testified to the treatment of India and Hinduism in California schools

genuinely want to do their job well and are generally open to input. Teachers do take you more seriously if they know you have already spoken with the principal and the superintendent. Change is not easy, and parents need to be aware of the teacher's challenges so we can relate to them effectively. For example, it is difficult for a teacher to admit his or her own ignorance, so it is important to respect their courage in doing so. A parent who talks openly about these challenges in a non-accusatory tone and offers solutions is welcomed. To parents I say: one parent has the ability to impact many children in a school. After some years of persistent engagement, a new district standard may even be adopted.

School district administrators may claim they are helpless because they have to teach from the textbooks and the state standards. However, parents can remind them that state standards also require that materials: 1) Be historically accurate; 2) Instill in each child a pride in his/her heritage and; 3) Avoid adverse reflection on a religion. We can remind them also that recent changes give them the freedom and responsibility to address the needs of their communities. Parents educated about this can be effective in bringing a quick change at the 6th grade level and then take it to higher grades. For parents at (non-religious) private schools, all this is much easier. Private schools are eager to better serve their customers.

Due to the large numbers of Hindu families in the San Francisco Bay Area, parental engagement can effect changes in every school district—and what happens here can start a nationwide trend. I volunteer myself to make a presentation at any school in the Bay Area if a parent arranges this with their school. The time has never been more favorable. Together we can improve how Hinduism is presented in schools.

TUSHAR PANDYA, 47, is a technology professional living near San Jose. He actively pursues the study of Hindu texts and volunteers in causes related to Hinduism and Indian sciences. See:

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Balinese Festival Finds Home in Germany

Devotees from far and near gathered in Hamburg for a richly colorful annual celebration honoring God, ancestors and righteousness

BY NIRAJ THAKER, HAMBURG

EVERY YEAR BALINESE HINDUS OBSERVE the ten-day Galungan festival celebrating the victory of dharma over adharma. Considered a special time when ancestral spirits visit the Earth, the date is calculated according to the *pawukon*, Bali's 210-day religious calendar. The final day in particular, called Kuningan, has a deep spiritual significance to Balinese Hindus, for whom staying connected to ancestors is a core practice. Those of German ancestry who attend each year have also felt its importance.

Each year, the Balinese Hindu community in Germany and Belgium selects one temple from a handful of temples in the region at which to celebrate this festival. In 2014, it took place in Hamburg. In front of the Museum für Völkerkunde (Museum of Ethnology) stands a traditional Balinese temple—a *padmasana*, consisting of a towering lotus throne atop which rests the Supreme God Acintya ("unthinkable, inconceivable")—carved from volcanic stone, shipped from Bali for construction and installed on the Kuningan day in 2010. I attended the festival on May 31, Kuningan day of 2014—the temple's anniversary.

The shrine was royally decorated with fruits, flowers and sweet offerings. From early morning, volunteers dotted the museum gardens, configuring decorations and setting up musical instruments and other ceremonial paraphernalia. The number of attendees grew to approximately 150 over the course of the day—most of them Balinese Germans with their families, German friends and relatives. Luh Gede Juli Wirahmini Bisterfeld—Juli for short—works at the museum and served as head priestess for the day. She spoke of the import of the non-Hindus in attendance: "As a tradition in Bali, Indonesian Muslims are always invited to attend; they take part in the prayers and give moral support."

Traveling from London in my Indian kurta pyjama, I felt underdressed among the majority of attendees who were attired in their finest Balinese outfits, many incorporating the color yellow. The Indonesian word *kuning*, from which the festival derives its name, means "yellow." Thus, on this day the Balinese decorate everything in yellow: yellow rice is offered, yellow flags are flown, yellow



dressers are worn and yellow fabrics adorn the temple.

Ketut Suda Negara, who had traveled from Helsinki, quipped, "A wise man said that beauty cannot be seen by the eyes or heard by the ears; it can only be felt. But in Balinese art, beauty can also be seen and heard!" Negara is a maestro of gamelan, the traditional ensemble music of Bali. He travels around the world to coach performers before such ceremonies, ensuring that they remain in sync and hit the right notes. And so they did,

in this city rich with its own musical history. Their artistry, the precise, trance-like rhythm with which the devotee-performers struck their various percussion instruments with small mallets, was very calming, and the divine sounds reminded me of those made by the artisans carving a new Siva temple from white granite, using only hammer and chisel, at the remote monastery in Hawaii where this magazine is produced.

It is thanks to the museum's director, Dr. Wulf Koepke, that the temple was installed

Fantastic festivities: (clockwise from left) Offerings are placed on tables in front of the padmasana installed outside the museum on May 22, 2010; Luh Gede Juli Wirahmini Bisterfeld, chief priestess for the festival, begins with the *sangkalpa*, assisted by her daughter Kim; people of all ages and origins join for the peace prayer and meditation; the Balinese tradition of dancing while presenting offerings during the *puja*

outside and a traditional Balinese house was built inside the museum, with the guidance of priests, to demonstrate how the traditional architecture of Bali assures harmony with nature. But Dr. Koepke, who takes part in most temple events, defers all compliments to Juli for initiating the cross-cultural ties that now hold strong between the German and Balinese communities.

Juli performed the *puja* with the assistance of her daughter Kim, a graduate student of international relations. This was my first experience of a Balinese-style *puja*, and I did not know what to expect. But just as we feel in other Hindu temples, there was a strong sense of devatas and spirits present in this open-air temple.

The weather responded magically as the ceremony progressed. Luh Putu Prapita, who teaches neural networking and served as coordinator for the event, provided explanation of what was happening: "Every year during the ceremony there are blustery winds and even showers, which stop when the *puja* finishes." True to form, strong gusts of wind greeted us from the outset when sacrifices were being made to appease the demons. Then the wind calmed. Again, at certain moments during the *puja* when dances or songs were offered, the Gods and ancestors made their presence felt in the form of a song and dance of the clouds, wind and sun. Toward the end of the *puja*, when final supplications and offerings were presented, the atmosphere was still, silent, Surya shining, giving all the strong feeling that the Gods and ancestors had accepted our humble gestures.

Despite some of the obvious differences between Indian and Balinese *pujas*, such as the sacrifice of a bird to please the asuric forces and the various eloquent dances that are offered, one gets the same tranquil feeling as from any Hindu temple ceremony. The offerings of flowers, water, rice, fruits, incense, mudras, fire and the sounds of bells and mantras were made in much the same way as in Indian *pujas*. A profound feeling of connectedness with the inner worlds and an atmosphere of bliss, contentment and peace pervaded.

Following the *puja*, everyone was served a scrumptious lunch. Balinese cuisine is not vegetarian—a variety of meat dishes ap-



ALL PHOTOS: NIRAJ THAKER



ALL PHOTOS: NIRAJ THAKER

peared—but among the vegetarian options were a delicious green bean salad called *jukut urab*, which has a rich coconut flavor combined with shallots and yellow sauce; steamed rice; and a fried noodle dish called *mie goreng* that I found familiar from my visits to Malaysia, served with the customary hot chili sauce called *sambal*.

Later in the afternoon, everyone playfully contributed to the task of tidying up. Laughter and friendly banter prevailed as the volunteers from across Germany, Belgium and elsewhere effortlessly cleaned up the temple area.

The day ended with a meeting of the heads of the regional groups known as *banjars* (see sidebar at right). They met to discuss a common topic of concern for Balinese at home as well as throughout the diaspora: the rapid encroachment on village land to develop Bali's growing tourist industry, such as with a Formula One race track. Luh Putu Prapita explained, "The meeting was concerned with the reclamation of Benoa gulf. We shared our thoughts on the government's plan and proposed potential actions to take, such as a petition and cultivating solidarity through music" (see bit.ly/bali-tolak-reklamasi).

According to "A Religion Without Borders" (HINDUISM TODAY, Jan/Feb/Mar, 2014), 700 Balinese families are among the estimated 100,000 Hindus residing in Germany. At present, the German government has only given official recognition to one temple—the Sri Lankan community's Sri Kamadchi Amal Temple in Hamm—as a Hindu religious organization; so another challenge is to ensure equal recognition of the religion, its temples and priests throughout Germany. This is true in other parts of Western Europe as well.

On this extraordinary day, I observed the Balinese to be among the most united, cohesive, fun-loving and close-knit of Hindus. They are also one of the most artistically expressive communities I have encountered, and I felt very much at home among them. Even their many interracial marriages appear to be well integrated, with spouses working in harmony to support each other's religious and cultural events. It was certainly a day I shall never forget.

Visit nyamabrayabali.com/en/

Adding color to Deutschland: (clockwise from bottom left) Luh Gede Juli Wirahmini Bisterfeld stands with Dr. Jeanette Kokott, a museum official, and Dr. Wulf Kopeke; Aryeni Willems, married and settled in Germany, blissfully plays the gamelan; a small fire is offered to the Gods and nature spirits at the entrance; locals admire the joged dance performance by Made Suardani Tanzius of Hannover during the puja



Germany's Bali-Style Communities

In Bali the community within each district forms a guiding council, called *banjar*. Balinese Europeans have adapted this social model. The *banjars* help each other organize festivals and provide a support network for members throughout the region. During annual meetings of all *banjar* leaders, issues affecting Balinese both in Indonesia and Europe are discussed.

The founders of Nyama Braya Bali (the association of *banjars* in Germany) envision ten *banjars* within the country, divided along roughly the same lines as the republic's states. Seven (labeled in blue on map) are active today: Berlin, with members from Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt; Hamburg, with members from Bremen, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein; Hannover, with members from Lower Saxony and Thuringia; North Rhine-Westphalia, with members from Rhineland-Palatinate and Lower Saxony; Hesse, with members from Rhineland-Palatinate; Baden-Württemberg; and Bavaria. Borders are permeable, with members joining whichever group is closest to them. Young Balinese students are special members; they join all the *banjars*, for they like to travel and meet the others. All the *banjars* in Germany gather for an annual pilgrimage to the temple near Brussels in neighboring Belgium, and the Brussels and Antwerp groups regularly participate in events held in Germany.

This mutual support is substantial. In the days and weeks leading up to Kuningan, for instance, members from *banjars* across the nation organized the timing of pujas, the dance sequences, the musicians, costumes, decorations, offerings, food, gifts, public relations and many more details.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Dancing a New World into Existence

From Malaysia to India, Ramli Ibrahim's gift of sacred movement touches the soul



ELSA RUIZ/ASIA SOCIETY

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK

HE HAS BEEN SIVA AND KRISHNA, countless mythical heroes and ordinary humans. He has traveled the globe, telling their wondrous tales through the magic of rhythm and dance. Datuk Ramli Ibrahim is a changemaker, an innovator with bells on his ankles. For over 30 years this Malaysian dance pioneer has nurtured Indian classical dance and contemporary modern dance. He brings together past, present and future on the lit-up stage with audacity and shows that culture is meant to be shared, regardless of faith or nationality.

As artistic director of Sutra Dance Theatre and chairman of Sutra Foundation, Ibrahim has taught dance to generations in Malaysia and India; and the Malaysian government has acknowledged him as a Living Heritage.

Although Ibrahim is Muslim, Hindu ragas and rasas resound in his soul. He has lost himself in the intricacies of Bharatanatyam

and Odissi, portraying Hindu Gods across the globe. His very name, Ramli Ibrahim, is a blend of two cultures. A special champion of Odissi, he collaborates with international performers, East and West. Besides nurturing Indian classical dance in his home country, Ibrahim has taken it around the world, even back to India.

In ancient times, traders from India plied the oceans exchanging spices for gold in the lands of Southeast Asia, bringing with them their religions, arts and culture. In modern times, it is highly qualified technology and medical workers who have taken their art and culture, their Gods and food to Southeast Asia, especially Malaysia. Ibrahim explains, "There are many Indians in Malaysia, and Malaysia itself has had a strong influence on India for centuries. It was known as *suvarna-dwipa*, the golden chersonese."

I met Ramli Ibrahim at the Asia Society in New York, where he and the Sutra Dance Theatre performed their new dance drama, "Krishna, Love Re-Invented," an enchanting performance of bhakti composed by Guru Deba Prasad Das, Guru Gajendra K. Panda and Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, with the concept, text and artistic direction by Ramli

himself. The lighting and set were designed by Sivarajah Natarajan, a core Sutra member whose work illuminates all the group's productions. The production premiered at the Music Academy Dance Festival in Chennai in January, 2014, then toured nine cities in Malaysia; the performance I witnessed was part of a 2014 US and Canada tour that took him to New York, Edmonton, Houston and the prestigious John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC.

Says Ibrahim, "'Krishna, Love Re-Invented' explores the *madhurya*, the essence of love in its sweetest, honey-like appeal, related to the myth of the pastoral God Krishna, who is a personification of love. The underlying erotic-mystical spirit of love of the gopis for Krishna sends the message of joy and celebration, aiming to lift the spirit under siege of the many calamitous events of 2014."

After the spellbinding show, I met with many of his friendly, vibrant dancers, still in costume, beautifully made up and bejeweled—Indian, Malay, Chinese—displaying the diverse nature of Malaysian society.

Early Training

Ibrahim has danced since childhood; but

With bells on: (left) Ramli Ibrahim as Krishna with the gopis in a performance at the Asia Society in New York, 2014; (below) at Angkor Wat in Cambodia, 2012

that was a time, he explains, when "Southeast Asian countries were concentrating on development and industry and everyone wanted to be an engineer or a doctor. Nobody wanted to be in the arts." Good at school, "I was pushed into the science stream and placed in a military college."

Later, at the University of Western Australia in Perth, "I knew what I wanted to do in life: I needed to follow my bliss. I pursued this path in the arts, specifically dance, because even as a child I knew I was a mover."

Ibrahim first learned ballet and modern dance, but his interest in Asian civilizations, the myths, brought him to "look back to India as the mother country for Southeast Asia."

He searched for solo dances that could really challenge him. "Being a Malay Muslim doing Indian dance, I knew I had to be better than others to succeed and get the accolades of connoisseurs back in India." Indian classical dance is highly challenging, and he feels blessed to have danced in India in the 16th-century Purana Quila in Delhi and at the fabled temples of Khajuraho, where he was invited by the Khajuraho Dance Festival Committee to perform with the world's best.

Though trained in Bharatanatyam, Ibrahim felt called by the Odissi style taught by Deba Prasad Das. In an interview with Uttara Asha Coorlawalla at the Asia Society, he explained, "Though I was exposed to the Kelucharan Mohapatra style of Odissi dance, I felt a more natural attraction to the style and composition of the late Deba Prasad Das, which tends to focus thematically on Saivite and tantric concepts and practices.... Throughout the Odissi dance world, the Kelucharan Mohapatra style of Odissi is dominant. But Malaysia is a unique spot in the world where the Deba Prasad style flourishes."

Sutra Foundation

Through the Sutra Foundation, Ibrahim presents a uniquely Malaysian interpretation of the arts: the Sutra Dance Theatre presents vibrant dance; the Sutra Gallery showcases the work of visual artists; and on the Amphi-Sutra stage, other performers can showcase their talents. Over the years Sutra has nurtured and presented many dancers and choreographers. As Ibrahim puts it, "The

Krishna, Love Re-Invented

In India, romantic love in its sublimated form took a definite turn with the Bhakti Movement when the concept of God was incorporated and entwined in this human obsession. As the ultimate Universal Lover, Krishna becomes the paramount object of devotion and of romantic love. This came about most intensely during medieval times when saints expressed their spiritual outpourings in the form of erotico-mystical poetry, which became viral as they resonated with the sentiment of the common folk. Love poems dedicated to the Gods were incorporated in the

rituals of worship.

In Odisha, the land of Odissi, to speak of Krishna is to speak of the most familiar and beloved of the Hindu Gods. For centuries, the spirit of Krishna has permeated the very fabric of life of the Oriyan people, coloring and designing its filigreed motif, cutting across all sections of the community, gender, age and walks of life. His pervasive spirit, Krishna Consciousness as the Supreme God, is incorporated in the concept of Jagannath, the presiding Deity of the holy city of Puri.

(from www.sutrafoundation.org.my)

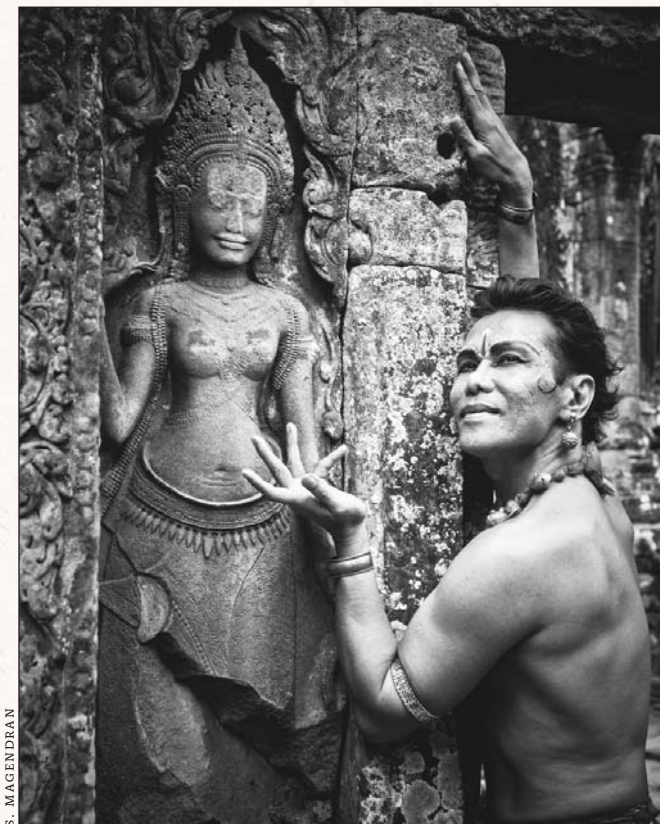
Sutra Foundation is an offering of the creative spirit that transcends all boundaries. It is a gift of the highest love to Malaysia."

It is also about his love for India and about how he has managed a cultural embrace between the two countries. When I met him in New York, he handed me a video taken in India during the 2003 Khajuraho Festival Performance Tour. It shows Ramli as a son of India dancing amidst the fabulous ancient temples where his art form began, traveling cross-country by train with his students, involved in rehearsals and the daily life of a traveling performer.

Ibrahim is also involved in education and outreach programs to connect with less privileged communities. While he keeps the flame of classical dance alive, he does not forget his early training in ballet and modern dance. He embraces movement in all its forms and has performed with many cultural organizations, including the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, where he has choreographed over 20 dances featuring the music of Ravel and Stravinsky.

"Sutra believes that contemporary Asian dance is a continuum of the traditional, and that both the traditional and modern can exist within the same time and space, under the same roof," he asserts. "How much more exciting and rich if the contemporary is also a repository of all three genres—classical, folk and tribal—representing the sum total of our past heritage." In that spirit he has collaborated with the Battery Dance Company, a bastion of American contemporary dance led by Jonathan Hollander, and is always open to international collaborations.

Ibrahim, who calls himself a thinking Muslim, does not believe there should be any religious taboos against dancing. "This is the 21st century; if you still want to live in medieval times, then what can we say. Some people give Islam a bad name, but I differentiate between spirituality and ritualized religion. I think a lot of my dancers understand the inner strength and energy that comes from a good performance, and this is the essence of the art form's spirituality."



S. MAGENDRAN

Encouraging Male Dancers

Ibrahim is to be commended for his encouragement of young male dancers, and, by the example of his own life, making the career of a male dancer something to aspire to. In a world where this profession seems to be on the decline, Ibrahim gives it wings. As the High Commissioner of India to Malaysia, Vijay K. Gokhale, noted, "The great artistic traditions of India are worth preserving for future generations if Indians are to understand their cultural origins. Those who have witnessed the great dance maestros of India perform the role of Krishna in the Ras Lila or Siva's Tandava Nritya will know that it would be an irredeemable loss to civilization if male dancers were to disappear from the stage."

Sutra Foundation and the Natyanjali Trust in India presented the dance drama "Joined in Dance," and also hosted the Nartaka (Male Dancer) Festival in Kuala Lumpur in 2012. That festival featured three days of solos and group works in Indian classical dance styles and had a discourse entitled "Male Matters." Ramli Ibrahim and Shanmuga Sundaram, artistic co-directors of the festival, noted that the goal was to demonstrate that male dancing can be exciting, beautiful and worth cultivating. "Males," they observed, "should discover once again that dance is the most natural and healthy way to integrate their outer and inner landscapes."

Ibrahim proclaims the value of dance to young people finding their place in the world: "I think the arts contribute incredibly to nation building and character building. A lot of individual empowerment and understanding comes from exposure to culture and the arts. It is an antidote to the extremist absolutism and dogma that is infecting the world. I am sure that education in the arts makes people civilized!"

The Magic of India, and of Dance

Ibrahim is constantly traveling. When I spoke with him, he was on his way to Ahmedabad to perform with the noted dancer Mallika Sarabhai and then on to Vadodara and Bhubaneswar for many more performances.

India is always on the map for Ibrahim—to connect with his teachers, perform to live music and interact with Indian audiences. He feels it is trial by fire, a voyage of discovery for him and his students as dancers. "It's very important to connect with Mother Earth, Mother India itself. Somehow the rasa comes much more easily for me in India. I find the experience very cleansing. I think my dancers understand dance and human relationships much better after performing there. I find it makes them better dancers faster by bringing them to India."

For Ramli Ibrahim, dance is a metaphor for

life, transcending religion and race and embracing the globe. Watching a performance by his company is like seeing a dream unfold, a dream seen with open eyes. Such is the power of the human body when fueled by this dancer's energy and spirit.

Odissi dance magically turns gestures and movements into poetry, into sculpture, into a joyful celebration of life and striving for perfection. While our bodies sit quiescent in our seats, our hearts somersault and leap through the air in recognition of a higher spirit, a union, a oneness that we all seek, a universality that touches all our lives. When Ibrahim and his dancers are on stage, you forget all else but the magic of movement and music, of ancient and modern tales coming alive. As he says, "Dance is ephemeral! You cannot own it like a painting, for the glimpse of beauty or truth—whatever you wish to call it—is fleeting. Yet the dance experience is intense and transformative, if you are lucky to see something extraordinary."

It is Ramli Ibrahim's life work to create those extraordinary moments that can transform and enrich us and make the world a happier, calmer place.

SEARCH "RAMLI IBRAHIM" ON YOUTUBE TO VIEW
NUMEROUS STUNNING VIDEOS OF HIS PERFORMANCES

LAVINA MELWANI is a New York based writer for international publications and blogs at www.lassiwithlavina.com

Style: Ramli Ibrahim and company in a performance of "Krishna, Love Re-Invented" at the Asia Society in New York, November, 2014



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ESTATE PLANNING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

You can find out what you need to know about estate planning in the UK at: www.hmrc.gov.uk/index.htm. You can also memorize Shakespeare’s 154 sonnets (www.shakespeares-sonnets.com).

Both are daunting tasks, especially for Hindu residents adjusting to a culture that uses terms such as “nil rate band” to describe how large an estate has to be before it is subject to inheritance tax.

Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs website, where estate planning rules are listed, repeatedly pleads with its readers to “seek legal advice,” like an exasperated teacher telling her blank-faced students “it’s all in the text.” But it’s a good place to start.

Because so much is at stake, HHE presents a few estate planning basics its UK supporters should know.

1. If your estate is not vulnerable to estate tax, you should still have a will or a trust that determines how you want your estate distributed. Otherwise, the courts will impose an impersonal formula that may or may not reflect your wishes.
2. Married couples need a written estate plan, even though no tax is imposed on the death of the first spouse. Without a plan, large estates may be vulnerable to tax at the death of the second spouse if nothing is done to preserve the estate tax exemption of the first to die.
3. Those who have lost a spouse and then remarried need to provide for children from their first marriage in writing. They should not assume their surviving second spouse will have the same concern for children from their prior marriage.
4. Written estate plans do more than distribute wealth; they can postpone distribution until heirs are capable of managing large sums prudently. They can also provide for heirs with mental or physical disabilities in ways that do not unwittingly jeopardize other benefits their heirs may be receiving.
5. If you own your own business, your estate plan may help you reduce the value transferred of business assets passed to heirs and so reduce possible estate tax.
6. Single people need written plans, otherwise their assets may go to those who don’t need them, such as well-to-do parents, rather than to others who do, such as struggling siblings.
7. Unless directed by your written estate plan, the court will ignore good causes you’ve supported for years and very close friends you want to remember.
8. Your written plan allows you to appoint executors and trustees. Without an estate plan, the court may appoint someone you would never have chosen for these sensitive and demanding roles.
9. The appointment of guardians for bereaved children—among the touchiest of estate planning issues—can be accomplished through a will. You can also specify financial support for the children’s maintenance and education.

These basic rules only scratch the surface of the tangle of regulations governing estate planning in the UK. What is clear is that the economic meltdown has made written estate plans more urgent than ever. A recent study of 3,000 adult UK residents by the London law firm Seddons showed that one in ten had been recently involved in a dispute following a death. One in five said they feared they would not be treated fairly, and one in four felt they would end up with nothing.

Marvin Simons, the head of Dispute Resolutions at Seddons, blamed the rise in disputes on the current economic climate. People are “so much more concerned about money and property values being so depressed, [it] is only likely to result in an escalation of these problems.”

HHE encourages estate planning, but not just for tax and economic reasons. For Hindus in the UK and elsewhere, estate planning documents are instruments of family peace. And what Shakespeare wrote of Sonnet 18 can be applied to your written estate plan: “So long as men can breathe or eyes can see/ So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.”



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	Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund Mano Navaratnarajah 75.00 Gassa Patten 1,350.00 Mano Rajah 75.00 Total 1,500.00	Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage Anonymous 25.00 Sankara Skandanatha 191.00 Michael 216.00	Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment Microsoft Matching Gifts Program 125.00 Bhaskar Arigela 9.68 Partha Ayalasomayajula 251.00 Anonymous 112.36 Dheeraj Handa 15.00 Girija & Girish Haran 2,000.00 Kishore Krishna 125.00 Natraj Narayanswami 33.00 Toshadevi Nataraj 30.00 Kaanchana Parameswaran 108.00 Arunasalam Vathavooran 100.00 Total 2,909.04
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		Yogaswami Hindu Girls’ Home of Sittandy Endowment Durvasa Alahan 500.00 Anonymous 894.36 N. Balasubramanian 10,000.00 Marlene Carter 162.00 Sunil Chacko 795.00 Sasikumar Darmalingam 10.00 Michael R. Eisen 25.00 Subramaniam Pennathur 50.01 Muthu Senthilkumar 51.00	Insurance Premiums Mrunal Patel 3,003.00
			Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment Other Donations 600.00
			Total Contributions \$269,658.19
			Funds at Market Value, Dec 31, 2014 Grand Total \$13,833,097.98



B

efore my curtain is drawn,
Show me the way
To His love;
Take me to His abode;
Lead me to the now
In eternity.

Pales the moon in the firmament;
Thy face in golden glow;
My solitude is broken
By the cry of a woman,
Muruga, Muruga, Muruga...
Wave upon wave,

The whispering winds
Hum Thy name.
The solemn mountains echo,
Muruga, Muruga, Muruga...
Shimmering are the waters
Of Manasarovar Lake—
From Thy brilliance.
The sky thunders
The righteousness of Thy Vel.
And my heart throbs
The vibrance of Thee,
who made the moment.

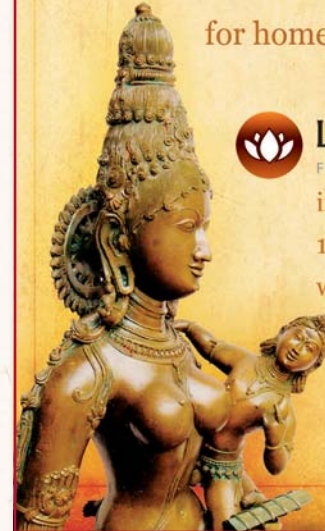
In the cold,
At the foothills of Kailash,
I stand in awe
Of the shifting mists,
Now concealing,
Now revealing
Thy Majestic Face.

And in the depths of my soul
Arises the wisdom
Of Gurudeva—
“Flying with Muruga,
Merging with Siva.”

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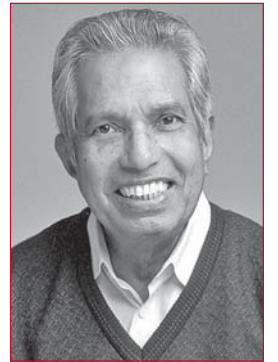
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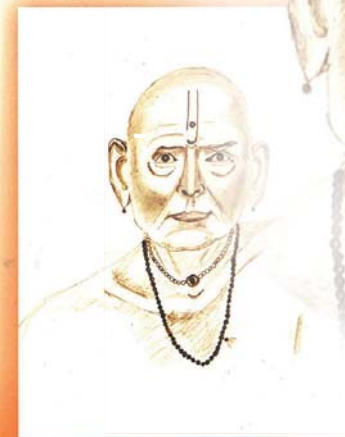
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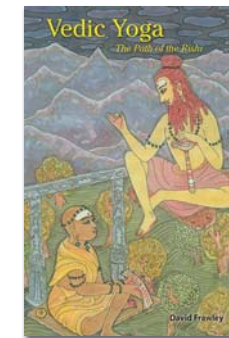


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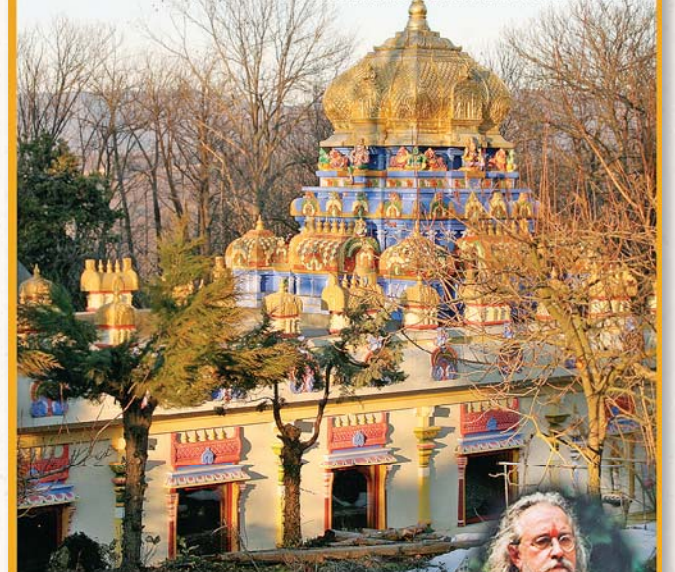
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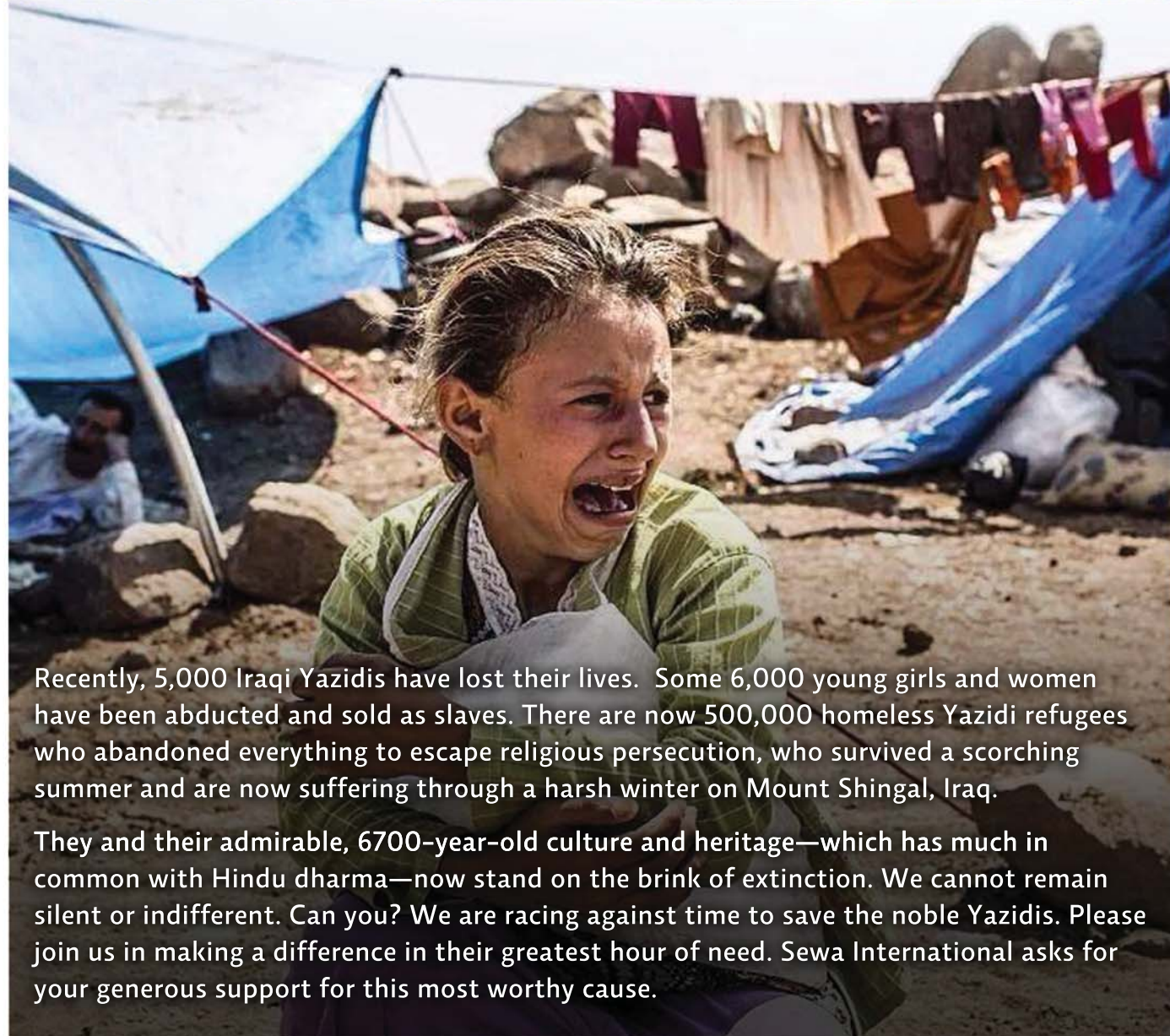
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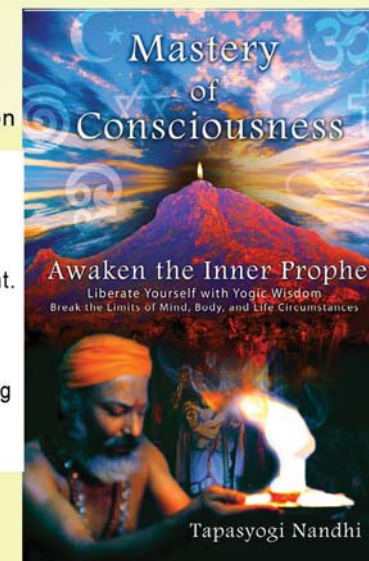
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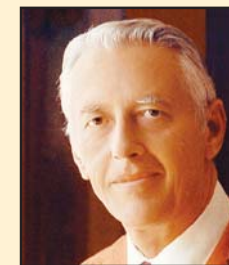
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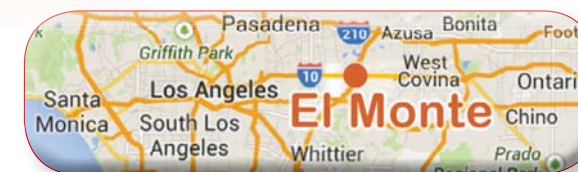
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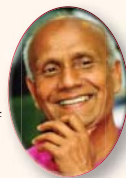
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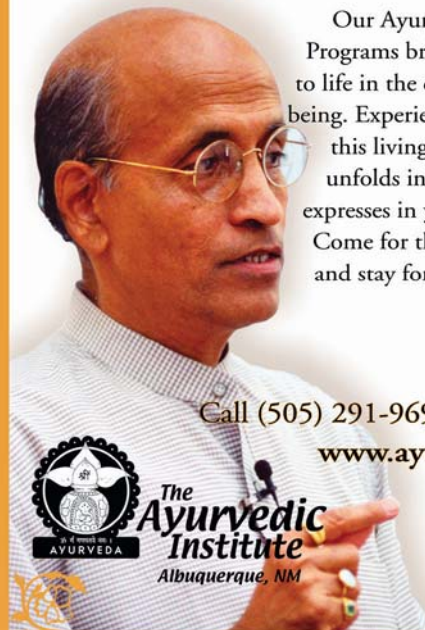
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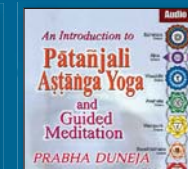
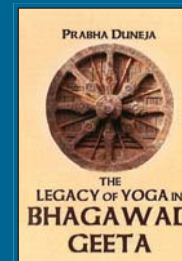
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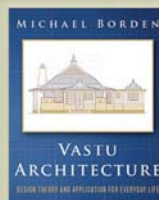
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May 22-25 (Fri-Mon)	Memorial Day Weekend Course for Adults & Children , Swami Vidadatmananda	Aug 27-30 (Thu-Sun)	Patrons' Course I , Swami Tattvavidananda and Swami Pratyagbodhananda
Jul 2-5 (Thu-Sun)	Independence Day Vedanta Course for Adults & Children , Swami Vidadatmananda,	Sep 4-7 (Fri-Mon)	Patrons' Course II , Swami Tattvavidananda and Swami Pratyagbodhananda
Jul 12-18 (Sun-Sat)	Bhasyam Course for Adults , Swami Vidadatmananda, Brhadaranyakopanishad	Sep 9-16 (Wed-Wed)	Yoga and Sound , Ramanand Patel, Mukesh Desai and Swami Tattvavidananda
Jul 12-18 (Sun-Sat)	Children's Vedic Course I , 9-12 yr., unaccompanied by parents	Sep 19-26 (Sat-Sat)	One-Week Vedanta Course for Adults , Swami Tattvavidananda and Swami Pratyagbodhananda
Jul 19-25 (Sun-Sat)	Children's Vedic Course II , 9-16 yr., unaccompanied by parents	Sep 27-Oct10 (Tue-Tue)	Two-Week Vedanta Course for Adults , Swami Tattvavidananda and Swami Pratyagbodhananda
Jul 19-25 (Sun-Sat)	One-Week Course I, Adults & Children , Swami Vidadatmananda	Oct 13-Nov 23 (Tue-Tue)	Fall Seven-Week Vedanta Course for Adults , Swami Tattvavidananda
Jul 26-Aug 1 (Sun-Sat)	One-Week Course II, Adults & Children , Swami Vidadatmananda and Swami Pratyagbodhananda	Nov 26-29 (Thu-Sun)	Thanksgiving Family Vedanta Course for Adults and Children , Swami Tattvavidananda, Meditation and Yoga
Aug 2-9 (Sun-Sun)	One-Week Course III, Adults & Children , Swami Vidadatmananda and Swami Pratyagbodhananda	Dec 24-31 (Thu-Thu)	Year-End Vedanta Course (Christmas) for Adults and Children , Swami Tattvavidananda, Swami Pratyagbodhananda
Aug 9 (Sun)	Pujya Swamiji's 85th Birthday	Jan 1, 2016	New Year's Day Celebration
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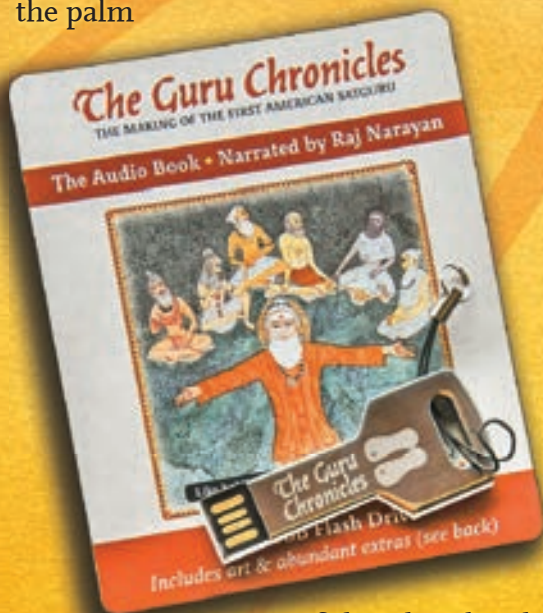
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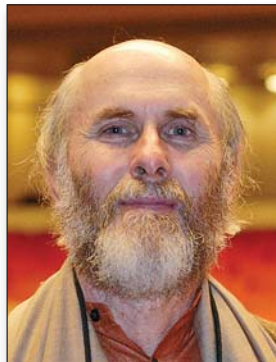
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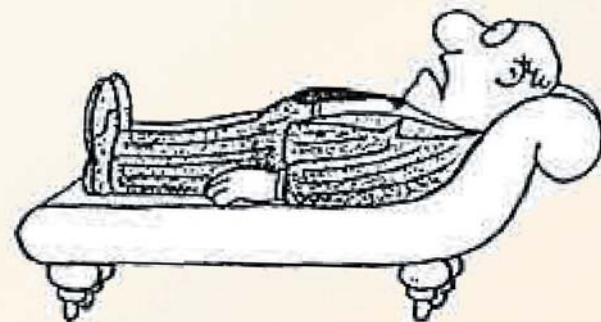
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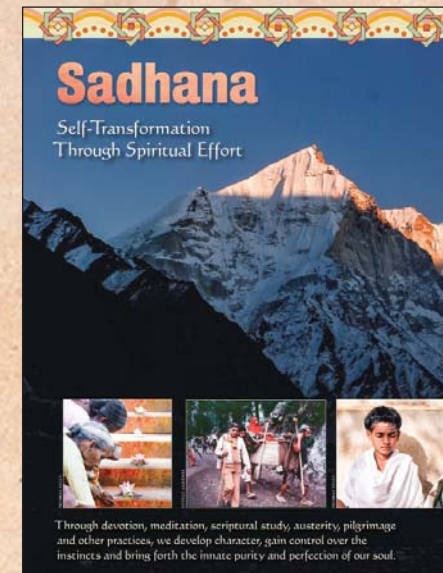
All Insight Sections Now Online

HIMALAYAN ACADEMY IS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE that our entire collection of HINDUISM TODAY Educational Insight sections—a treasury 35 years in the making—is now available online. You can freely download any of our 54 (and counting) Insights from past issues of the magazine—in PDF, Mobi or ePub format—or simply read them online.

These articles provide a wealth of practical and perceptive information on a wide array of topics. Learn about the four great religions collectively called Hinduism, the fine art of meditation, the basic protocols for visiting a Hindu temple, the power of mantra yoga, the chakras, the nakshatras, the art of meditation, Indian history, ayurveda, the many nuances of a Hindu wedding, or explore a complex Agamic elucidation of the five powers of Siva. Each of these four to 20-page-long articles is carefully crafted with relevant (and elegant) photos, art and design, making the most complex topic easy to grasp. Teachers use them for classes and parents enjoy their simplicity and well-researched accuracy. These educational nuggets can inform children or anyone unfamiliar with our great heritage by printing them to be handed out at mandirs, classrooms, conferences or anywhere needing a better understanding of the Hindu religion. You can find a list of all our insight sections, with links to the text of each, here: bit.ly/allinsights

Years ago we created the book *What Is Hinduism?* as a compilation of 46 of these Insight sections. Recently an avid reader who has subscribed since 1990 told us that while others may use the *Bhagavad Gita* as their source of religious and spiritual insight, he uses *What Is Hinduism?* “It is my *Gita*.”

Our publisher, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, wrote in his introduction to *What Is Hinduism?*: “All faiths are grappling with their self-definition as we rev up to the breathtaking speed of the information age—a period more intense and kinetic than any other in the history of the world. Teachings and practices that were once accepted without question are often now rejected unless evidence and logic are marshaled to give them plausibility. To survive, customs and traditions must bear up under intellectual



scrutiny, must prove themselves helpful and immediately usable.

“Hinduism is no exception. Hindu education for youth is languishing, and communities around the world are struggling to compose clear, concise presentations of dharma. It would be possible to spend an entire lifetime, indeed, many lifetimes, absorbing and practicing the teachings of just one sect of the Hindu faith. Yet, there is a need to understand this complex conglomerate as a whole as well. There is a preeminent need, the world over, for cogent, comprehensive explanations of the various facets of Hinduism—and the shared features of its various sects—from a mountaintop perspective—to answer the sincere questions of children, coworkers, neighbors, critics and colleagues, and to provide a nonacademic presentation for those of other religions seeking insight into this ancient path.

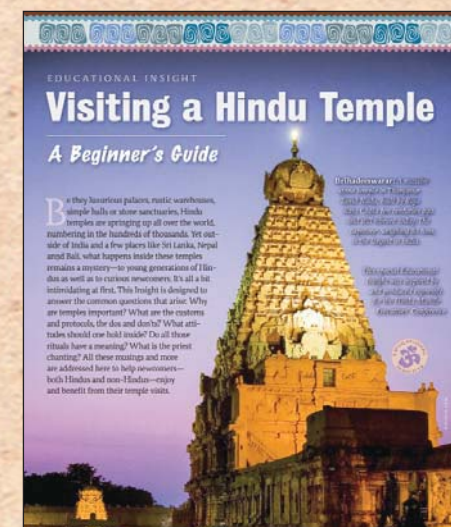
“Producing quality educational materials on Hinduism is inherently difficult precisely because it is one of the world’s most paradoxical and easily misunderstood religious traditions. It can be equally confounding to the outsider and to those born in dharma’s embrace. This is because it is actually a family of many different faiths that share essential practices and characteristics.

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“Today, Hinduism is going digital, working on its faults and bolstering its strengths. Leaders are stepping forth, parents are striving for ways to convey to their children the best of their faith to help them do better in school and live a fruitful life. Hindus of all denominations are banding together to protect, preserve and promote their diverse spiritual heritage.”

